

# POWER MANIFESTATIONS OF THE SĪRAH

Examining the Letters and Treaties  
of the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ)



Zafar Bangash

THE INSTITUTE OF CONTEMPORARY ISLAMIC THOUGHT





In the Name of Allah,  
the Mercy-Giving, the Merciful



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Zafar Bangash  
edited by Afeef Khan

THE INSTITUTE OF CONTEMPORARY ISLAMIC THOUGHT  
*Toronto London Kuala Lumpur Karachi Pretoria*



Published by Crescent International Newspapers Inc. for  
The Institute of Contemporary Islamic Thought (ICIT)  
1380 Stouffville Road, Richmond Hill, ON. L4E 3S3 Canada  
*Published simultaneously in Canada and South Africa.*

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**ISBN 978-0-9688591-8-6 (pbk.: alkaline paper)**

Canadian Cataloging-in-Publication (CIP) Data

Bangash, Zafar

Power Manifestations of the Sirah: Examining the Letters  
and Treaties of the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) / Zafar Bangash  
Includes bibliographical references and index.

1. Sunnah
2. Sirah — Explanation of the life of Muhammad (ﷺ)
3. Muhammad (ﷺ)
4. Islamic Letters and Treaties
5. Islam

First Printing: June 2011

لما وقعت بنو إسرائيل في المعاصي نهتهم علماءهم فلم ينتهوا . فجالسهم في مجالسهم . وواكلوهم . وشاربوهم . فضرب الله قلوب بعضهم ببعض . ولعنهم على لسان داود وعيسى بن مريم ( وذلك بما عصوا وكانوا يعتدون ) [ المائدة : ٧٨ ] وكان رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم متكئا فجلس فقال : لا والذي نفسي بيده حتى تأطروهم على الحق أطرا [ وفي رواية ] ثم يلقاها من الغد وهو على حاله فلا يمنعه ذلك . أن يكون أكيله وشريبه وقعيده . فلما فعلوا ذلك ضرب الله قلوب بعضهم ببعض . ثم قال : ( لعن الذين كفروا من بني إسرائيل على لسان داود وإلى قوله فاسقون ) [ المائدة : ٧٨ - ٨١ ] ثم قال : كلا والله لتأمرن بالمعروف ولتنهون عن المنكر ولتأخذن على يد الظالم ولتأطرنه على الحق أطرا . ولتقصرنه على الحق قصرا زاد في رواية أو ليضربن الله بقلوب بعضكم على بعض . ثم ليلعننكم كما لعنهم

‘Abdullāh ibn Mas‘ūd was known to have related the following incident in the company of Allah’s Messenger (ﷺ),  
*“When Banū Isrā’īl fell into a state of disobedience, their scholars warned them, but they did not heed the warning(s). Then they [the scholars] began to socialize with them [the rulers] — sharing the same meetings with them — trusting them [in a civil sense], and breaking bread with them... And when they [the scholars] did that, Allah conflicted their hearts [against one another] and condemned them in the words of David and Jesus, son of Mary [Sūrah al-Mā’idah:78–81]... And the Messenger of Allah, who had been reclining [until this point], assumed an erect posture and said, ‘Never, by Allah, you will most definitely authorize the ma‘rūf and disestablish the munkar and you will take the zālim by his hand and put him in a frame of ḥaqq [by necessity] and you will confine him to the ḥaqq not to exceed its perimeters or else Allah will cause your hearts to collide and then He will condemn you as He condemned them [Banū Isrā’īl].’ ”*

لا يؤمن أحدكم حتى أكون أحب إليه من ولده ووالده والناس أجمعين

On the authority of Anas ibn Mālik,  
Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) was known to have said,  
*"Not one of you will [ever] be securely committed [to Allah] until  
I am more beloved to him than his [own] son, his [own] father  
and all of mankind."*

لا فضل لعربي على عجمي ولا لعجمي على عربي ولا لأبيض على أسود ولا لأسود على  
أبيض إلا بالتقوى . الناس من آدم وآدم من تراب

Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) was known to have said,  
*"There is no preference for an Arab over a non-Arab, and none for a  
non-Arab over an Arab, and none for a white man over a black man,  
and none for a black man over a white man, except in taqwá. [All]  
mankind [came] from Adam and Adam was [formed] of earth [soil]."*





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## FOREWORD

Every book is written for a purpose and with a specific audience in mind. Most books are also sponsored by some organization or benefactor, usually an endowment or institution. The author gets a hefty sum to seclude himself/herself from regular work and devote full time to research and writing. This book, however, has not been sponsored by anyone — endowment, university, organization, or individual. It has been compiled in the late hours of the night or whenever time has permitted after taking care of other responsibilities — *Crescent International*, coordinating work on the monumental *tafsīr*, *The Ascendant Qur'an*, by Imam Muḥammad al-ʿĀṣī, and other related activities. That is also the reason why this book has taken much longer than I had hoped.

If the theme of this book focuses on the power manifestations of the Sīrah, then the various acts are the noble Messenger's (ﷺ) letters and treaties and how they enhanced the power of Islam. Barring a few notable exceptions, this aspect of the Sīrah has received scant attention from Muslim scholars. We will consider why it is important to direct awareness to this aspect among the

multiple dimensions of the *Sīrah* but first let us address the question of the target audience.

This book is intended primarily for Muslims, especially the youth. It is hoped that they will get a glimpse into a hitherto neglected dimension of the *Sīrah*. While almost all *Sīrah* books provide a chronological description of the blessed life of the noble Messenger (ﷺ), they seldom analyze *why* certain events took place, what decisions were made by the noble Messenger (ﷺ), and what were the consequences of such decisions.

There is also another aspect this book is intended to dispel: that Islam is only about rituals and a personal relationship with Allah (ﷻ). While the ritualistic argument has been deliberately promoted by those who refuse to live by the pristine principles of Islam — the corrupt, so-called Muslim rulers and their courtiers and hangers-on — ordinary Muslims too have fallen for this limited engagement with Allah (ﷻ), and are thereby almost insignificant when it comes to a global ambiance of institutionalized oppression and human degradation. If Islam were only about rituals, there would have been no need for the noble Messenger (ﷺ) to leave the Cave of *Ḥirā'* after receiving the first revelations. He could have invited the people to join him in his retreat atop *Jabal al-Nūr*, away from the hustle and bustle of life, and not issued to the Makkan *jāhili* system the prophetic challenge that resulted in so much suffering for Muslims. But we know that he did not organize sessions of meditation or *dhikr* without addressing the burning issues confronting people at the social, economic, and political levels. The divine revelation clearly stated, **“When you have completed your daily chores [O Prophet], then turn to your Lord [in earnest ‘*ibādah*’]” (94:7–8).**

There is not a single *āyah* in the Qur'an that calls upon Muslims to detach themselves from the affairs of the world although there are many *āyāt* that enjoin Muslims not to become consumed by materialism. There is a difference between being engaged with the world and being totally consumed by it or a lifestyle of extravagant consumption. It is important to understand this difference well.

Let us return to the aspect of the power dimension in the *Sīrah*. At a social gathering with some Muslim scholars a few years ago, this writer brought up the subject of the need to study and highlight the power dimension in the *Sīrah*. One of the Muslim scholars, a professor at an American university, who has written several books on the Qur'an and philosophy, immediately asked, "What is so privileged about the power dimension in the *Sīrah*?" The question reflects one of the reasons for this book. If even highly educated Muslims are not attuned to this aspect of the *Sīrah*, how can average Muslims be blamed for clinging to rituals, thinking that this is all Islam requires them to do?

In the preparation of this book, I have had the advice and guidance of many individuals, both scholars and non-scholars. The inspiration came from the pioneering paper of the late Dr. Kalim Siddiqui, *Political Dimensions of the Sīrah* (1419AH/1998CE), which was published after he had left this earthly abode in Dhū al-Qa'dah 1416AH (April 1996). His untimely death has left a huge void in the Muslim world. He sincerely believed that studying the *Sīrah* from "a power perspective" was the key to an intellectual revolution in Muslim thought. This was also consistently reflected in his writings.

I have greatly benefitted from my discussions with such scholars as Ayatullah Ja'far Subhānī, Ayatullah Akhṭarī, Ayatullah Qawmī, Agha Muḥammad Bāqir Anṣārī, Imam Muḥammad al-Āṣī, Iqbal Siddiqui, and Afeef Khan. Both Imam al-Āṣī and Afeef Khan have also helped with providing accurate translation of Arabic texts in order to get a clearer understanding of certain words and expressions used by the noble Messenger (ﷺ) in his letters and treaties. Afeef Khan has also ably helped with editing this volume. To them all I am greatly indebted for their advice and guidance. I have also benefitted immensely from comments made by Zainab Cheema, Bilal Choksi, and Naved Ansari, who read the introduction to this book. As they are all students or have just completed studies, nonetheless their profound understanding of key issues is truly inspiring. It gives us great hope for the future of the Ummah.

This book is dedicated to the memory of Dr. Kalim Siddiqui (1349–1416AH/1931–1996CE) who was a scholar — the likes of

which there are only a few duplicates — a teacher, and a guide but above all a very dear friend.

Any errors or omissions are entirely mine for which I seek the forgiveness of Allah (ﷻ) and the indulgence of readers. I would be grateful for any advice, guidance, or corrections on a subject that is still not fully explored by Muslim scholars.

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Jumādā al-Ākhiraḥ 5, 1432AH (5-6-2011CE)





# TRANSLITERATION CHART

## Consonants

|   |                     |   |    |
|---|---------------------|---|----|
| أ | none (initial)      | ض | ḍ  |
| ؤ | ' (medial or final) | ط | ṭ  |
| ب | b                   | ظ | ẓ  |
| ت | t                   | ع | ‘  |
| ث | th                  | غ | gh |
| ج | j                   | ف | f  |
| ح | ḥ                   | ق | q  |
| خ | kh                  | ك | k  |
| د | d                   | ل | l  |
| ذ | dh                  | م | m  |
| ر | r                   | ن | n  |
| ز | z                   | ه | h  |
| س | s                   | ة | ḥ  |
| ش | sh                  | و | w  |
| ص | ṣ                   | ي | y  |

## Vowels and Diphthongs

|    |   |    |   |    |    |
|----|---|----|---|----|----|
| □  | a | ا□ | ā | □ى | á  |
| □ُ | u | آ  | ā | □ئ | ay |
| □ِ | i | و□ | ū | □ؤ | aw |
|    |   | □ى | ī |    |    |

The small box in the table above represents an Arabic consonant; for instance, if the box were replaced with the letter *f* (ف), then the table would assume the following configuration,

|    |    |     |    |     |     |
|----|----|-----|----|-----|-----|
| فَ | fa | فَا | fā | فَى | fá  |
| فُ | fu | فَا | fā | فَئ | fay |
| فِ | fi | فُو | fū | فَؤ | faw |
|    |    | فِى | fī |     |     |

## Tanwīn and Tashdīd

|    |    |    |             |    |      |
|----|----|----|-------------|----|------|
| ا□ | an | □ئ | ayy         | □و | aww  |
| □ى | an | □و | ūw          | ف  | ff   |
| □ُ | un | □ئ | īy (medial) | ش  | shsh |
| □ِ | in | □ئ | ī (final)   | ر  | rr   |

Similarly, if the box were replaced with the letter *f* (ف), then the table above would look like the following,

|     |     |     |              |     |      |
|-----|-----|-----|--------------|-----|------|
| فَا | fan | فَئ | fayy         | فَو | faww |
| فِئ | fan | فُو | fūw          | ف   | ff   |
| فُ  | fun | فِئ | fīy (medial) | ش   | shsh |
| فِ  | fin | فِئ | fī (final)   | ر   | rr   |

Note that the transliteration rules have only been applied to Arabic words and names, not those in Farsi or Urdu.



## INTRODUCTION

Allah (ﷻ) describes the noble Messenger (ﷺ) in glowing terms in the glorious Qur'an. Some of the *āyāt* pertaining to his worldly mission, especially with regard to the power dimension of the *Sīrah* include,

- He is the prototypical role model:

**Verily, in the Apostle of Allah you have the finest of exemplars for everyone who looks forward [with hope and awe] to Allah and the Last Day, and conscientizes Allah unceasingly (33:21).**

- He is the last and final Messenger of Allah (ﷻ), the Seal of all the Prophets (ﷺ):

**[And know, O Muslims, that] Muhammad is not the father of any one of your men, but is Allah's Apostle and the Seal of all Prophets. And Allah has indeed full knowledge of everything (33:40).**

- He has been sent as a messenger to all mankind:

Say [O Muhammad], “O mankind! Verily, I am an apostle of Allah to all of you, [sent by Him] unto whom the dominion over the heavens and the earth belongs! There is no deity/authority save Him; He [alone] grants life and deals death!” Securely commit, then, to Allah and His Apostle — the untutored prophet who [himself] has securely committed to Allah and His words — and follow him, so that you be guided! (7:158).

- He has been sent as one who brings glad tidings and warns all of mankind:

Now [as for you, O Muhammad], We have not sent you otherwise than to mankind at large, to be a herald of glad tidings and a warner; but most people do not understand [this]... (34:28).

- He is sent as a mercy to all the worlds:

And [thus, O Prophet], We have sent you as [an evidence of Our] grace toward all the worlds (21:107).

- The Messenger (ﷺ) has been sent with *āyāt* to guide mankind:

He it is who has sent unto the unscriptured people an apostle from among themselves, to convey unto them His *āyāt*, and to raise their moral standard, and to coach them in the divine Writ as well as wisdom — even though before that they were indeed, most obviously, lost in manifest error (62:02).

- He has been sent to bring mankind out of darkness into light:

[He has sent] an apostle who correlates unto you Allah’s *āyāt*, so that He can extricate those who have made a

secure commitment [to Allah] and do what is right out of the depths of darkness into the light... (65:11).

- Allah (ﷻ) will make His *dīn* (Islam) dominant over all other man-made systems:

He it is who has sent forth His Apostle with the [task of spreading] guidance and the *dīn* of truth, to the end that He may cause it to prevail over every [other] *dīn* [social convention] — however hateful this may be to those who ascribe divinity/authority [to any besides Allah] (9:33, 61:9).

This selection of *āyāt*, a few among many, highlight the role assigned by Allah (ﷻ) to His noble Messenger (ﷺ) in the worldly realm. He was the Messenger of Allah (ﷻ) as well as the ruler and guide on earth. He was divinely guided to establish Allah's (ﷻ) rule on earth since, as the *best of exemplars*, every field of human endeavor, including politics, was included in his domain of responsibility and pedagogy.

From the Qur'an we learn there were three earlier Prophets — Yūsuf, Dāwūd, and Sulaymān (عليه السلام) — who became rulers; however, each of them inherited dominion and rule from a previous sovereign.<sup>1</sup> Only the last and final Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) created a state where no such entity existed before. In Islam, authority and power on earth imply jurisdiction over a geographic social order where divine laws are implemented in totality. Thus, as the ruler of a particular territory, the Prophet (ﷺ) also dealt with other rulers in and around the Arabian Peninsula. We need to discuss and more deeply investigate this aspect of the Prophet's (ﷺ) role in society. In particular, we need to review the treaties he enacted and the letters he sent to various rulers not only for the purpose of inviting them to Islam but also for securing peace and justice in society.

How did the Prophet (ﷺ) acquire power and what role did the numerous treaties he entered into play in enhancing this power? Scholars of Sirah (a biographical account of the Prophet's (ﷺ) life)

have identified some 250 to 300 letters, treaties, and documents of the Prophet (ﷺ). Some of the original letters still exist and have been preserved.<sup>2</sup> It is interesting to note that while writing skills were not fully developed at the time — only 17 persons in Makkah were able to read and write<sup>3</sup> — all Qur’anic revelations were meticulously recorded under the direct instructions of the Prophet (ﷺ) as were his letters and treaties.

Although numerous Sirāḥ scholars have alluded to the Prophet’s (ﷺ) letters and treaties, no one has perhaps compiled them in a more systematic manner than Dr. Muḥammad Ḥamīdullāh, whose well-documented book, *Al-Wathā’iq al-Siyāsiyah fī al-‘Ahd al-Nabawī wa-al-Khilāfah al-Rāshidah*,<sup>4</sup> arguably provides the most outstanding discourse on the subject. Dr. Ḥamīdullāh has meticulously recorded most of the letters, treaties, and documents that were prepared under the instructions of the Prophet (ﷺ), compiling a wealth of information for researchers studying this aspect of the Sirāḥ. The work of this writer represents a humble contribution to the on-going extension of this effort. The aim is not merely to reproduce these documents but to analyze how they helped the Prophet (ﷺ) to acquire and consolidate power by entering into alliances with the various tribes, groups, or even individuals. Naturally, the just exercise of power by the Prophet (ﷺ) undermined the concentration of corrupt power in the Arabian Peninsula and beyond, especially by the Qurayshī power center in Makkah.

All these aspects need to be discussed from a hitherto ignored perspective: the power dimension of the Sirāḥ, that is, how the Prophet (ﷺ) acquired unchallenged power within the short span of his prophetic mission — 23 years. We know that after he prepared a handful of followers in Makkah, he was able to establish the Islamic State in Madinah and then extend its influence to virtually the entire Arabian Peninsula in less than 10 years. This remarkable transformation came about as a result of careful planning, strategic alliances, and the judicious use of force to neutralize the power of the enemies without resorting to wholesale destruction or massacres. Never before in the history of mankind has such rapid expansion — 274 km<sup>2</sup> per day — taken place with merely 270 peo-

ple killed on both sides during that seminal 10-year period (150 of the enemy and 120 from among the Muslims).<sup>5</sup> Demystifying the power dimension of the *Sirah* will help us to read the Prophet's political achievements in a new light.

Most *Sirah* books refer to the Covenant of Madinah — also characterized as a *charter*<sup>6</sup> or the *first written constitution*<sup>7</sup> in the world — as the first written document of the Prophet (ﷺ). While this was certainly the first comprehensive document that was prepared under his instructions, there were letters that preceded it. To remind ourselves of the historical context, we will briefly take account of the advent of Islam in Makkah, the difficulties the Prophet (ﷺ) encountered there, and how he overcame them to establish the Islamic State in Madinah. And in the unfolding of this final prophetic engagement with humanity, we will consider the letters and treaties that facilitated first the establishment and then the consolidation of the Islamic State.

The Prophet (ﷺ) started his mission in Makkah with a handful of followers. For the first 13 years, this number remained relatively small. The chiefs of Quraysh, the nucleus of Makkah's power culture, were relentless in their hostility to Islam as well as the Prophet of Allah (ﷺ). This hostility, initially expressed through ridicule, was later manifested in subjecting Muslims to intense persecution. Examining the motives behind the persecution is also illuminating. The Qurayshī chiefs could hardly claim that Muslims posed a physical threat to their vested interests, at least not in the early days of Islam. There was clearly something else that provoked their belligerence. They rightly perceived Islam as a threat to their exploitative system, which victimized the weak and the downtrodden, and of which they were the principal beneficiaries.

Throughout history exploiters have targeted those who pose a challenge to their position, regardless of how remote the possibility of replacement is or how distant it may be in the future. It was not as if the Makkan elite could point to anything wrong with the message of Islam; they were aware that they were guilty of maintaining an exploitative system in which the rich and powerful terrorize others into submission. When the Prophet (ﷺ) declared that

all people, regardless of birth, tribe, or wealth were equal in the sight of Allah (ﷻ), this immediately rekindled the atavistic classism and racism of the Qurayshī aristocrats. How could the slaves, whom they considered to be inferior beings, and women, who were treated as disposable commodities, be equal to them, they asked. There was also an ideological dimension to their hostility: Islam proclaimed a message of the Oneness of Allah (ﷻ), the singularity of His authority, and the incontrovertibility of His law that directly challenged their long-held belief in a multiplicity of gods and the inviolability of their own superiority. More importantly, Islam questioned the exploitative economic system that was built around the gods of the tribes. This, the Qurayshī chiefs were not prepared to tolerate, hence their oppression of Muslims.

The oppression was so severe that some Muslims even had to conceal their newly adopted commitment to Allah (ﷻ) and His Prophet (ﷺ). It was not until Allah (ﷻ) secured an opportunity for Muslims to migrate to Madinah (known before the Prophet's (ﷺ) arrival as Yathrib), some 300 kilometers to the northwest, that their numbers increased significantly. Even in Madinah, the Muslims' problems did not disappear immediately or completely although they now resided in a relatively safe environment. The Quraysh launched repeated attacks against the nascent Muslim presence in Madinah, clearly aiming to destroy the emerging power of Islam. This revealed the true nature of the struggle; even though Muslims had left Makkah, the Quraysh continued to pursue them and would not let them live in peace. Why? The answer lies in the ideological challenge that Islam posed to their *jāhili* system and the guilty conscience of the Qurayshī *mushriks*. Islam for them posed a political, social, and ideological threat and should it be allowed to establish itself, it would soon cripple their illegitimate power position and undermine their economic interests. Shortly after the Muslims arrived in Madinah, the Qurayshī decision-makers sent a message to 'Abdullāh ibn Ubayy ibn Sallūl — the well-known *munāfiq* whose hopes of becoming the king of Yathrib were dashed by the Muslims' migration — telling him to expel the immigrants from the city or face serious consequences.<sup>8</sup> When the Prophet (ﷺ) heard



about this, he personally visited Ibn Ubayy and convinced him not to side with the Quraysh against the Muslims, thus averting a major crisis in Madinah.

Oppressors have never willingly allowed their privileges to be taken away, no matter how unjust their position may be. This was true then and it is true today. The wars, murder, and mayhem unleashed against the peoples of Asia, the Muslim East, Africa and many other places by the militarily powerful countries today reflect the true nature of exploiters throughout history. The vicious propaganda campaign launched against Muslims trying to defend their rights demonstrates that it is not enough to be right; one must also have the power to defend one's rights. This lesson, so clearly demonstrated in the *Siraḥ*, must be fully internalized by Muslims. The Prophet's political treaties illuminate the vital importance of properly building and then exercising power to secure the body politic.

Despite the lack of arms and with limited manpower, the Muslims repeatedly stood their ground against the better-armed Makkan invaders. In their first major battle, at Badr, the Muslims inflicted a crushing defeat on the Quraysh killing a large number of prominent Makkan chiefs and deflating their arrogance somewhat. This is another lesson from history that is also confirmed by the distilling words of the noble Qur'an: a small but dedicated number of fighters struggling in Allah's (ﷻ) way with sincerity will often overpower a much larger force.<sup>9</sup> With minor exceptions, the Muslims consistently gave a far better account of themselves in successive battles against the much larger and better-armed *mushrik* forces. It was not until the Treaty of Ḥudaybiyah at the end of 6AH that the Muslims found some respite from their traditional Makkan foes. Following this treaty a large number of inhabitants in the Arabian Peninsula, who had hitherto been reluctant to enter the fold of Islam for fear of antagonizing the Quraysh, the most powerful of all the Arabian tribes, became Muslims.<sup>10</sup>

We also note that in Makkah the majority of those who responded to the Prophet's (ﷺ) call were the weak, the exploited, and the victimized — the slaves, the poor, the women, and the youth. True, among them were also the offspring of the elite but

they too were subjected to very harsh treatment and pressured by their family elders to abandon the new Islamic life orientation. Far from succumbing to such pressure, the Muslims, preferring to suffer punishment and torture, refused to abandon Islam or their loyalty to the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ). They were convinced of the truthfulness of his message and understood that the Makkan social order was exceedingly flawed. Firstly, there existed a spiritual orthodoxy that at its core placed the management of *ghaybī* forces in the control of man-made artifacts, otherwise characterized as idols. Consistent with the reductionist spiritual and moral position of subsuming the *ghayb* to man's whims was that daily material life would be regulated, managed, and authorized by those occupying a certain privileged class position. Thus simultaneously, there existed those practices that typically accompany class polarization: slavery, theft disguised as taxation, privilege sustained by erroneous legalism and tradition, and moral vices such as prostitution, fornication, gambling, and drunkenness. It was the Muslims' firm conviction against and their ideological antipathy toward this degenerate social order that enabled them to withstand the oppression.

One of the most remarkable aspects of the Prophet's (ﷺ) life-struggle was that even when faced with great difficulties and challenges, he never lost hope; he always remained optimistic. Equally remarkable is the fact that while he appeared powerless in Makkah and needed the support and protection of his uncle Abū Ṭālib, he was clear in his mind that Islam would acquire the power and glory Allah (ﷻ) had promised. There is a particularly revealing episode about the Qurayshī chiefs complaining to Abū Ṭālib of his nephew's rejection of their gods and wanting him to implore the Prophet (ﷺ) to desist from such practice. The Prophet (ﷺ) enticed them, "*Shall I tell you of a statement that, were you to utter, would put the Byzantine and Persian empires at your feet?*" The Qurayshī leaders, momentarily distracted from their quest by this clearly intriguing offer, took the bait because it was congruous with their material and mercantile view of things. Furthermore, they were enamored by the vision that someday they may exercise dominance over the two superpowers of the day. Thus when they insisted on details of

the Prophet's (ﷺ) offer, they were greatly confounded when he told them that if they were to recite the *shahādaḥ* — I testify that there is no deity/authority but Allah and that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah — they would acquire all the power and glory in the world and the Persian and Byzantine empires would fall at their feet.<sup>11</sup> Even in those bleak days when the Prophet (ﷺ) could offer little or no protection to his followers, he was thinking in terms of overpowering the Byzantine and Persian empires. Such thinking could hardly emanate from the mind of a person who perceived himself as lacking power or authority; he was convinced that Allah (ﷻ) would help him in his entrusted mission.

This was also the message delivered by Allah (ﷻ), recorded in the noble Qur'an in the fifth year of the Prophet's (ﷺ) mission, when the Zoroastrian rulers of Persia defeated the Christian Byzantines in Palestine, capturing Jerusalem. The Makkan chiefs taunted the Muslims about why Allah (ﷻ) did not help the Byzantines who were people of revealed scripture against the Persians who apparently held to a pagan faith. The rejoinder came, courtesy of divine revelation, in a manner that not only predicted the victory of the Byzantines but also of the Muslims over their *mushrik* tormentors. The divine words reflect immense optimism,

**Defeated have been the Byzantines in the nearer land;  
yet it is they who, notwithstanding this their defeat,  
shall be victorious within a few years: [for] with Allah  
rests all power of decision, first and last. And on that  
day will the truly committed [too, have cause to]  
rejoice in Allah's help to victory: [for] He gives victo-  
ry to whomever He wills; He is the Almighty, the  
Dispenser of grace. [This is] Allah's promise. Never  
does Allah fail to fulfill His promise — but most peo-  
ple know [it] not (30:2–6).**

The Makkan *mushriks*, greatly amused by what they heard, made even more fun of the early Muslims. Given the Muslims' weakness and helplessness at the time, the Makkans' skepticism was under-

standable but how does one explain the Muslims' complete acceptance of this prediction? There is no evidence to suggest that even a single Muslim questioned the veracity (*nastaghfir-allāh*) of the predictions contained in these *āyāt* or further queried the Prophet (ﷺ) about them. In fact, one of the Makkan *mushriks*, Umayyāh ibn Khalaf, chief of the Jumah clan, approached Abū Bakr (رضي الله عنه) and placed a bet with him regarding the Qur'anic revelation. He said if the Byzantines gained victory within three years, he would give Abū Bakr (رضي الله عنه) 10 camels, otherwise the latter must do so. When the Prophet (ﷺ) heard about this, he advised Abū Bakr (رضي الله عنه) to increase the timescale to 10 years since the *āyah* refers to a period of less than 10 years, and the bet to 100 camels.<sup>12</sup>

When the persecution of Muslims became intolerable in Makkah, the Prophet (ﷺ) permitted some of his companions to migrate to Abyssinia whose Christian ruler, he said, was known to be just. Two points are worthy of note here: the Prophet (ﷺ) said that the Abyssinian king was a Christian, and that he was just. The only distinctions of rank in an Islamic society are based on the level of God-consciousness and attachment (*taqwá*), and thus Christians and Jews — who are called *Ahl al-Kitāb* (People of the Book) by Muslims — are given a special measure of kindness and respect as they are adherents of previous scripture. Throughout his blessed life, the Prophet (ﷺ) made great efforts to cultivate cordial relations with the followers of both scriptures inviting them to Islam on the basis of the teachings they were already familiar with. Both the Torah and the Bible predicted the coming of the last prophet, what he would look like, the time period when he would appear, and descriptions therein confirmed what the Prophet (ﷺ) recited of Allah's (ﷻ) final testament. Despite knowing this, the Yahūd especially refused to accept Islam; instead, they showed great hostility to the Prophet (ﷺ). Their rejection, however, was not based on anything they found unacceptable in Islam; rather, it was their narrow self-interest and arrogance that prevented them from accepting the message of truth.

Not everyone, however, fell into this category. The Abyssinian king, al-Najāshī (Negus), was a notable exception. He had a reputation for being just and fair. Thus, when the Muslims

arrived in his land, he welcomed them and gave them sanctuary and protection. The Quraysh were alarmed when they learned that some Muslims had escaped from Makkah. They sent bounty hunters to intercept them but were unsuccessful. The Muslims managed to get on a boat at the Red Sea port of Jiddah, setting sail for Abyssinia before the would-be Makkan apprehenders arrived. The Qurayshī chiefs then sent two emissaries to Abyssinia to get the Muslims extradited back to Makkah. One of them, ‘Amr ibn al-Āṣ, a shrewd and gifted advocate, complained to the Negus that these people had abandoned the common practice and social convention of their forefathers, but they had not become Christians either, adopting instead a new way altogether. He hoped that such information would prejudice the king’s mind against the Muslims and he would agree to the extradition request. Instead of acceding to ‘Amr’s request, the Negus wanted to know, as would befit a just ruler, about the Muslims’ new *dīn* before making a decision.

The Muslims were called to present themselves before the king. They chose Ja‘far ibn Abī Ṭālib (ﷺ), the Prophet’s (ﷺ) cousin, to be their spokesperson. When the Negus asked them, “What is this new religion that is different from mine as well as from any other known religions?” Ja‘far (ﷺ) responded thus,

O king! We were in a state of ignorance and immorality, conforming to idols, eating carrion, and committing every kind of inequity. We honored no relative and assisted no neighbor. The strong among us exploited the weak. Then Allah sent us a prophet, one of our own people, whose lineage, truthfulness, loyalty, and purity were well known to us. He called us to conform to Allah alone and to repudiate all the stones and idols that we as well as our ancestors used to hold in high esteem [as our sustainers and providers]. He commanded us always to tell the truth, to remain true to our trusts and promises, to assist the relatives, to be good to neighbors, to abstain from eating blood and consuming things forbidden, and to avoid fornication, perjury, and false witness.

He commanded us not to rob the wealth of the orphan or falsely accuse the married woman. He ordered us to conform to Allah alone and never to associate any other rivals with Him, to establish the regular *ṣalāh*, to fast, and to pay the *ḥaḳāh*. We believed in him and what he brought to us from Allah and followed him in what he enjoined and forbade. Our people, however, tried to sway us away from our *dīn* [that is, our new life orientation] and persecuted us and inflicted upon us great suffering that we might reenter into the immoral practices of old. As they vanquished and berated us unjustly and made life intolerable for us in Makkah, we chose your country and came here to live under your protection in justice and peace.<sup>13</sup>

It would be evident to any discerning person that Ja'far (عليه السلام) did not merely say that the *mushriks* of Makkah prevented the early Muslims from praying or fasting. While he said that the Prophet (ﷺ) enjoined them to establish *ṣalāh* and fast, his emphasis was on the inequities, injustices, and oppression prevalent in Makkan society. To reiterate, Ja'far (عليه السلام) said,

Our people tried to sway us from our *dīn* and persecuted and inflicted upon us great suffering that we might reenter into the immoral practices of old. As they vanquished and berated us unjustly and made life intolerable for us in Makkah, we chose your country and came here to live under your protection in justice and peace.

Nothing could be clearer about the message of Islam. It posed an immediate ideological and social challenge to the *jāhili* system in Makkah that was unwilling to tolerate a point of view based on conformity to the One God, Allah (ﷻ), especially one that commanded against the gratuitous exploitation of the weak by the rich and powerful. It was not about the rituals of Islam; the Makkan elite would have tolerated these as long as they did not threaten

their privileges, which were derived from exploiting and usurping the rights of the weak.

It is evident that Islam is intrinsically linked with justice, peace, and fair dealings. Even in those early days, the Muslims had no illusions about their mission in life; they were not concerned merely with rituals to which so many Muslims have become habitually addicted these days, but the more important aspects of justice and fairness. Far be it for some Muslims to consider these noble principles as being associated with and fundamental to Islam, hence their obsession with such things as *ṭahārah*, *najāsah*, and the manner of offering *ṣalāh*. Such exigent responsibilities as relieving the oppressed and speaking out against injustice, however, cannot be fulfilled when one is weak; one must have power to confront the oppressors.

One of the important ways through which the Prophet (ﷺ) was able to consolidate temporal power was to invite regional power constituencies into a just framework of non-aggression where their rights and responsibilities were clearly delineated. The Prophet's (ﷺ) example shows that political due diligence — to the end of enacting mutually beneficial treaties based on honoring the *legitimate* needs of participating constituencies — always preceded military efforts to undo the deleterious repercussions associated with the violation of such agreements and treaties.

Among the earliest of the Prophet's (ﷺ) efforts in this direction, long before he migrated to Madinah, was the relationship of protection he inaugurated with the Negus of Abyssinia upon the Muslims' arrival there. After Ja'far's moving address to the Negus, in response to Makkan invocations for the return of the fugitives, the Muslims established very cordial relations with the Negus and a good number of historians and Hadith scholars agree that he embraced Islam. This is also confirmed by a letter the king wrote in response to another letter from the Prophet (ﷺ) in which he said that he had taken *shahādah* — the testimony of commitment to Allah (ﷻ) and His Messenger (ﷺ) — through Ja'far (رضي الله عنه). In addition to the exchange of letters with the Negus, there is also evidence that while migrating from Makkah to Madinah, the Prophet

(ﷺ) gave a “letter of immunity” to Surāqah ibn Mālīk, the tracker who was pursuing the Prophet (ﷺ) in hopes of capturing and bringing him back to Makkah for a 100-camel reward guaranteed by the Makkan aristocrats.<sup>14</sup>

Soon after the Covenant of Madinah was drawn up, recognizing the authority of the Prophet (ﷺ) as head of state and codifying a pact of security and mutual protection between all the inhabitants of the Madinan city-state — Muslims, unscriptured Arabian inhabitants of Madinah, and Jews — the Prophet (ﷺ) turned his attention to the tribes (power factions) residing between Madinah and the Red Sea port of Yanbu‘. This political initiative was strategic: through this area that lies to the west of Madinah and stretches to the Red Sea coast, passed the Makkan trade caravans on their way to Syria and Palestine. It was the Makkans’ economic lifeline. Controlling it would provide enormous leverage to Muslims in dealing with or exerting pressure on the Quraysh. After all, they were the avowed enemies of Islam and the Prophet (ﷺ), and had plotted to kill him before he managed to escape from Makkah.

The Prophet (ﷺ) personally visited many of these tribes and entered into written agreements with them. Some tribes accepted Islam, others did not; however the treaties were not contingent upon their becoming Muslims. Most of them willingly entered into peace and non-aggression agreements with the Prophet (ﷺ). Moreover, they agreed to either help the Muslims or remain neutral in case of war. These developments fostered important implications for the emerging Muslim power base — the prototypical Islamic movement. The treaties expanded the influence of the Islamic State at the expense of the Quraysh, who too had long-standing agreements with the same tribes, enabling their seasonal caravans to pass unmolested through the region. Considering that attacking and robbing caravans was common practice among the tribes, the Quraysh had made deals that ensured safe passage for their caravans. Such deals consisted of money in exchange for secure passage through their specific areas — much the same way today, where the dominant power culture pays off proxies in the



“non-aligned” world so that multi-national corporations can locate there. These were mutually beneficial arrangements and often also included partisan military cooperation during tribal feuds. By clinching his own agreements with these tribes, the Prophet’s (ﷺ) exemplary political acumen engineered this generational power equation into the favor of the nascent Islamic reality in Madinah. These were not the only tribes with whom treaties were signed; closer to Makkah there were others as well, who became allies of the Muslims long before the liberation of Makkah in 8AH.

While the Covenant of Madinah was important because it established new rules of conduct in a divinely conforming society and provided the Muslims a safe haven in Madinah, the Treaty of Ḥudaybiyah enabled them to be free of worries from their traditional foes in Makkah for at least ten years hence. That is why the Qur’an refers to it as a *manifest victory*.<sup>15</sup> For the first time in their history, the Muslims were recognized as a rival power center and not a breakaway faction of the Quraysh. Similarly, it opened a political doorway for various tribes to ally with the Muslims if they so wished without fearing reprisals from the Quraysh. The significance of Ḥudaybiyah and the opportunities it opened for Muslims is best contextualized by examining its influence on the phenomenal increase in the number of Muslims and the power they consequently gained. Those who embraced Islam at the time did so out of conviction. With some significantly injurious exceptions — the *munāfiqs*, for instance — the early Muslims were truly committed to the cause of Islam and were prepared to lay down their lives for it. The Prophet (ﷺ) knew that those who joined and followed him did so out of the full commitment of faith and incorruptible conviction that would enable them to surmount any challenges they faced.

The confrontation with the Yahūd of Khaybar, inviting the rulers of various kingdoms to Islam, and taking on the chiefs of Makkah after they violated the Treaty of Ḥudaybiyah were only possible because the Muslims had unshakable faith in the righteousness of their cause. They did not fear death; they welcomed it because they knew Allah (ﷻ) would reward them if they died while struggling in His way.

There were two superpowers during the time of the Prophet (ﷺ): the Persian and Byzantine empires. Both were able to take advantage of the lack of any central authority in the Arabian Peninsula to extend their influence there. The Persians had appointed governors in Oman and Bahrain (eastern part of the Arabian Peninsula), while the Byzantines had established a buffer state in Northern Arabia, and controlled Syria. When the Prophet (ﷺ) sent letters to world leaders inviting them to Islam, he received varying responses. Some accepted Islam, like the king of Abyssinia and the governor of Oman. Others, like the king of Persia, reacted angrily and yet others who were inclined toward Islam — for example, the Byzantine emperor, Heraclius, held back fearing the loss of his throne as a result of his priests' displeasure — could not yield to it due to a misguided perception of local circumstances. What motivated them to act in the way they did to virtually identical letters? Were they able to withstand the rising power of Islam and what was their ultimate fate? We need to consider these aspects in some detail keeping in mind the new perspective.

Finally, there was the Prophet's (ﷺ) final *khutbah*, during his last Hajj before he bid farewell to this world, that has important implications for the just exercise of power in society. All these milestones in the Prophet's (ﷺ) life-struggle need to be discussed and analysed to provide new insights into understanding how he accomplished what he did in such a short time.

Such an analysis is all the more relevant because of the sordid political, economic, military, and social condition of not only the Muslims today, but all oppressed people who have been variously divided into nearly 200 nation-states, who have to endure border conflicts and dislocations, and who have been imperiled by financial crises and the lack of good food, healthcare, and clean water. After almost 250 years of “democracy” and over 60 years of “United” Nations, the majority of the world's people still have no access to institutional political representation, the distance between the world's richest and the world's poorest is now close to 100:1, and two of the three biggest industries in the world are arms and drug (cocaine, heroin, etc.) sales.

As this book goes to press, the revolution-minded protests in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Yemen, and Bahrain, the collapse of another government in Lebanon, the dismemberment of the Sudan, the ongoing ethnic cleansing of the Palestinians, the undeclared wars in Yemen and Somalia, the radiation poisoning of Iraqi and Afghan civilians, the currency devaluations in Argentina, Greece, Ireland, and Spain, the ravaging of the Congo for its mineral wealth, the “election” of IMF operatives to top executive positions in the Ivory Coast and the Palestinian Authority, the collapse of housing markets and employment in North America, and a whole host of other global destabilizations are a testimony to the nonexistence of just political representation that would preclude the kind of “correction” achievable through violent and paramilitary means.

And to rectify this level of imbalance in man’s affairs on earth, all of Allah’s Prophets (ﷺ) were sent to show humanity how to set up, manage, and utilize institutional mechanisms of justice. Allah’s (ﷻ) divine words essentialize this reality,

**Indeed, [even aforesaid] did We send forth Our apostles with all evidence of [this] truth; and through them We bestowed revelation from on high, and [thus gave you] a balance [wherewith to weigh right and wrong], so that [societies of] men would be erected upon [standards of] institutional justice; and We bestowed [upon you] from on high [the ability to make use of] iron, in which there is awesome power as well as [a source of] benefits for man; and [all this was given to you] so that Allah might mark out those who would stand up for him and His Apostle, even though He [Himself] is beyond the reach of human perception. Verily, Allah is Powerful, Almighty! (57:25).**

The reference to iron in this *āyah* is not incidental; there are times when even a prophet has to resort to military means in order to displace the racism, classism, and economic polarization that is characteristic of a corrupt power culture. Certainly the condition of

Makkah, the Arabian Peninsula, and the larger surrounding world at the time of Muhammad (ﷺ) was no different than the world today, though the level of complexity today is greater. Not to belittle the efforts of previous prophets in any way whatsoever, the most detailed and uncorrupted recipe for building a just society in the face of unrelenting opposition by vested interests is contained in the Qur'an and the *Sīrah* and *Sunnah* of Muhammad (ﷺ). And the only way to achieve such a society is by employing and staying true to — despite all confidence-sapping obstacles and equivocating rationalizations from the world of *kufr* and *nifāq* — the methodology of the Prophet (ﷺ) in implementing Allah's (ﷻ) guidance.

There may be many reasons for consolidating power in the hands of a just executive authority, but the most important of these is to represent those constituencies in the body politic that are historically deprived of opportunity and perpetually subjected to fear: the oppressed, the lower classes, the indigent, and the dispossessed. These unfortunately make up the bulk of humanity, historically as well as globally; and their only hope on earth is to yearn for a principled advocate who strives for their happiness and security. Muhammad (ﷺ) was and is that advocate: he is the embodiment of all the qualities of all previous Prophets (ﷺ). He is not owned by those who pray five times a day or fast in Ramaḍān, nor is their endorsement required for him to relieve the suffering of the tyrannized and underprivileged. He was sent by Allah (ﷻ) as a grace for all, Muslim and non-Muslim alike. It was his example that elevated personal character building into a social force (*al-ladhīna āmanū*) whose concentrated impact took the societal form of equilibrating and liberating economic (*zakāh*), political (*shūrā*), and military (*jihad*) institutions.

Injustice today enters into the very minutest aspects of our individual lives as well as in the grandest aspects of our social lives precisely because it is institutional; we are socialized into a worldview from cradle to grave that accepts as normal collateral damage in the theater of war, gender friction, the appropriation of public budgets by special interests, and the subversion of the environment by capitalist fiat. Institutional injustice cannot be corrected by

individuals, regardless of how good they are, how committed they are, or how resolute they are. What is required is a civil government (leader and representative institutions) whose consummate objective is to rid society of all those influences that would deprive it of its essential attachment to Allah (ﷻ), and thereby cause it to be free. To this end, a conversation between Abū Dharr (رضي الله عنه) and the Prophet (ﷺ) is illustrative,

*I [Abū Dharr] asked, “O Messenger of Allah, what were the Scrolls of Ibrāhīm [Ṣuḥuf Ibrāhīm]? He replied, “They were all parables.” And from them [he elaborated on one of these parables in Allah’s (ﷻ) words], “O King who is imposed, put to trial, and exuding vanity! I did not commission you [to be the ruler] so that you could accumulate worldly possessions piece by piece; rather, I commissioned you to deflect away from Me the supplication of the oppressed.”<sup>16</sup>*

This immediately identifies the mission and vision for those who are chosen to lead a social order, a people, or a country; and it simultaneously describes the characteristics of those who normally find themselves in these positions and abuse their authority to concentrate both wealth and power.

The primary responsibility of an imam, *khalīfah*, or any leader of men for that matter, is to relieve the suffering of the oppressed. And one cannot accomplish this, in an effort to soothe the conscience, by contributing \$1 a day to a relief organization. If one truly wants to make a generational difference whose impact will be felt by millions, perhaps billions, then he has to get at the sources of injustice: racism, birthright entitlement, and God-denial. For it is these that are responsible for perpetual war, slavery, proxy governments that undermine the potential of the people, and the concentration of wealth in the hands of a greedy, unscrupulous elite. None other than Muhammad (ﷺ) left a plain and universally accessible example to build from scratch a societal instrument to combat the degradation of the human spirit — an instrument that could be built and utilized in any place during any era from the

same incontrovertible sources, provided that the sincere justice-seekers would be willing to follow his example without deviation.

And that in large measure is the objective behind publishing this book: to observe how the Prophet (ﷺ) bound important power constituencies into civil agreements and then held them to what they said they would do, in an effort to show Muslims of all times how to consolidate their own civil character into a staging base for coordinated activities against injustice. Our hope is not to repeat what others have already said, nor to give a chronological account of the Sīrah with some additional details, as has been done in previous examinations of the Sīrah. We seek to transition from the descriptive to the analytical with a view to providing answers to our contemporary problems through the Sīrah of the Prophet (ﷺ), who was described by Allah (ﷻ) Himself as the *best of exemplars*.

## Notes and References

- 1 Qur'an, 12:54–56, 2:251, 27:16, 27:36; see also,
 

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(London, UK and Toronto, Canada: The Institute of Contemporary  
Islamic Thought, 2000), p. 28.
- 2 One of the letters is preserved in the Topkapi Museum in Istanbul. Others are in the possession of either individuals or various libraries and museums. Look for details in the following references,
 

Dr. Muḥammad Ḥamīdullāh, *Rasool-e Akram ki Siyaasi Zindagi* (Urdu).  
(Karachi, Pakistan: Darul Asha'at, 2003), pp. 140–87.

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- 3 Aḥmad ibn Yaḥyā ibn Jābir al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ al-Buldān*. pp. 471–72; quoted in,
 

Dr. Muḥammad Ḥamīdullāh (Muḥammad Raḥimuddin, translator), *An Introduction to the Conservation of Hadith in Light of the Ṣaḥīfah of Ḥammām ibn Munabbih*. (Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia: Islamic Book Trust, 2003), p. 4.

- 4 Ḥamīdullāh, *Al-Wathā'iq al-Siyāsīyah*.
- 5 Dr. Muḥammad Ḥamīdullāh, *Ahd-e Nabawi ki Maidan-e Jang (Urdu)*. (Rawalpindi, Pakistan: Ilmi Markaz, 1998), p. 19.
- 6 R.A. Nicholson, *A Literary History of the Arabs*. (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1962), p. 173.  
  
Joseph Hell, *The Arab Civilization*. (Lahore, Pakistan: 1943), pp. 25–26; described herein as an *ordinance*.  
  
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- 7 Dr. Muḥammad Ḥamīdullāh, *Le Prophete de l'Islam (Payghambar-e Islam: Urdu translation from French)*. (Multan, Pakistan: Beacon House, 2005), pp. 201–03, 214–19.  
  
W. Montgomery Watt, *Muhammad at Medina, 4th edition*. (Karachi, Pakistan: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 3 (both authors above refer to it as the *constitution*).
- 8 Abū Dāwūd Sulaymān ibn Ash'ath al-Azādī al-Sijistānī, *Sunan Abū Dāwūd, Volume 2, Khabar al-Nadhīr*; quoted in  
  
Shibli Naumani, *Seeratun Nabi, Volume 1 (Urdu)*. (Lahore, Pakistan: Nashiran-e Qur'an Limited, undated), p. 311.
- 9 Qur'an, 2:249, 8:65.
- 10 Abū Ja'far ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Tārikh al-Umam wa-al-Mulūk (popularly known as Tareekh-e Tabari), Volume 1 (Urdu)*. (Karachi, Pakistan: Nafees Academy, 1987), p. 92.  
  
Abū 'Abdullāh Muḥammad ibn Sa'd, *Kitāb al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā, Volumes 1 & 2, 6th edition (Urdu)*. (Karachi, Pakistan: Nafees Academy, 1987), pp. 270–71.
- 11 Abū al-A'lā Mawdūdī, *Tafheem ul-Qur'an, Volume 4*. (Lahore, Pakistan: Maktaba-e Ta'meer-e Insaniyyat, 1974), p. 727.
- 12 Lest this episode raises questions in the minds of some Muslims regarding gambling, since it is prohibited in Islam, it should be noted that, firstly, such

prohibition had not come into force at the time. Rules regarding social and moral conduct and the prohibition of undesirable behavior patterns such as alcohol consumption, gambling, usury, and so on were revealed later. In Makkah the emphasis was on the Oneness of Allah (ﷻ), rejection of the oppressive *jāhili* system, and the strengthening of *īmān* (faith-commitment) of the initial Muslims. Most of Islam's legislative rules were revealed and implemented when the Islamic State with a territorial base came into existence following the Hijrah (migration) of Muslims from Makkah to Madinah. Secondly, unlike the risk of loss associated with games of chance, gambling, and betting operations, there is no uncertainty associated with the words of Allah (ﷻ) or the predictions of the Prophet (ﷺ); and thus fidelity to these words and predictions are a sure thing, and cannot be subject to the vagaries of chance.

- 13 Abū Bakr Muḥammad ibn Ishāq ibn Yasār and Abū Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Malik ibn Hishām, *Seeratun Nabi, Volume 1, (rendition of Muḥammad ibn Ishāq's original work, Urdu)*. (Lahore, Pakistan: Idara-e Islamiyyat, 1989), pp. 216–17.

Muḥammad Ḥusayn Haykal (Dr. Ismā‘īl Rājī al-Fārūqī, translator), *The Life of Muhammad* (ﷺ). (Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia: Islamic Book Trust, 1993), p. 99.

- 14 Ibn Ishāq and Ibn Hishām, *Seeratun Nabi, Volume 1*, pp. 327–28.

Ḥamīdullāh, *An Introduction to the Conservation of Hadith*, p. 17.

- 15 Qur’an, 48:01.

- 16 Narrated by Abū Dharr al-Ghifārī and recorded by al-Mundhirī.





## MUSLIM MIGRATION TO ABYSSINIA: THE PROPHET'S (ﷺ) FIRST EMISSARIES

Human history is replete with examples of how the rich and powerful exploit the poor and weak. When the wealthy acquire worldly power, they invariably create the conditions in which injustice flourishes and man's inhumanity to fellow human beings becomes the norm. The rich insist they have the right to get richer but the poor must not complain or demand a share of this wealth, even as private wealth increasingly becomes the deciding factor in how public monies are disbursed and utilized. They use every means at their disposal, fair and foul, to hoard assets and prevent the disadvantaged from ever being allowed to acquire the means to live a dignified existence. If per chance, a person should emerge to advocate for the rights of the poor and the oppressed or question such injustices, he is immediately branded a rebel and troublemaker, and no effort is spared to silence or crush him.

At the advent of Islam in Makkah, the prevailing condition of the Arabian society was not altogether different. When the noble Messenger (ﷺ) proclaimed the message of Islam and its principles of fairness, justice, and equity, he immediately enraged the rich and powerful. The Makkan elites were determined to prevent this "dan-

gerous ideology,” which propagated fairness and justice, from gaining adherents, lest it establish a foothold in society and gradually undermine their vested interests.

Little has changed in the 1,400 years since the time of the noble Messenger (ﷺ). In the current global situation, the scale of oppression, exploitation, and degradation has in fact increased exponentially. Lethal methods — ranging from “hi-tech” torture, rendition (kidnapping), threats to family members, life incarceration in solitary confinement, experimentation with new psychotropic drugs on prisoners, and outright assassination — have been devised to silence and eliminate those who speak out against such practices. These lethal scare tactics only complement a vast new array of remotely-operated weapons that can erase millions of innocent lives with little or no moral recrimination. Today, one nuclear bomb can not only incinerate millions of people instantaneously but also leave behind a level of environmental radiation poisoning that will continue to cause the slow death of millions of others for generations to come due to increased cancer rates, miscarriages, birth deformities, and psychological trauma. The two Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, both victims of US atomic bombs near the end of the Second World War, immediately come to mind.

More recently though, after 60 years of huffing and puffing about the dangers of atomic weapons, babies born with unspeakable deformities in Iraq, especially in Fallujah, are occurring at 2–9 times the rate of that in Hiroshima, because of the use of depleted uranium shells by US shock troops. The country’s land and water resources have been poisoned and will remain so for thousands of years. The same is true for West Bank Palestinians living near Israel’s Dimona nuclear facility, and native American reservations that coincidentally border America’s underground nuclear testing grounds in the southwest. How these catastrophic conditions, laced as they are with racism and war crimes, can be prevented is one of the concerns Muslims ought to address by studying the Sirāḥ through a different perspective.

In the Makkan society of the Prophet’s (ﷺ) time, the scale may have been relatively small because the population of the city

was perhaps 10,000, but this does not mean there was any less injustice or oppression. Torture is torture, regardless of whether one person or a thousand are victimized. The Prophet's (ﷺ) mission was aimed at eradicating the societal sources of injustice that allowed such exploitation and oppression to continue.

The Makkan system was built around making idols available to the oppressed classes, as an opiate. To this end, the Ka'bah itself, the first House of Allah (ﷻ) on earth, was littered with hundreds of man-made figurines, statues, and graven images. In point of fact, the Qurayshī aristocracy could have cared less about these idols, except in matters related to ceremonial issues and certain superstitions embedded in Arabian culture; they were more attuned to prostrate before the god of mammon, than to any lifeless carvings and sculptures. Not unlike the rationalizations provided by today's super-rich and super-powerful, this was a convenient device for Makkah's blue bloods. These idols — being around for hundreds, perhaps thousands, of years and being projected as omnipotent gods to the average people — apparently approved, by their silence and by doing nothing to change the situation, the class polarization of Makkan society in addition to its tribal solidarity (*'aṣabiyyah*), and thereby validated the way the aristocratic establishment was running things. Without eliminating the expectation on the part of the average people that these idols would actually do something to relieve their suffering as well as the expectation of birthright entitlement on the part of the Makkan power brokers, and then bringing both classes into a classless conformity with the one true God, Allah (ﷻ), these discriminatory practices could never have been abolished.

The powerful chiefs of Makkah understood this point well and viewed the message of Islam as a threat to their exploitative system. They knew that if allowed to take root, Islam would undermine their privileged position in society. Initially, they ridiculed the message; when that did not deter people from joining Muslim ranks, they turned to oppression, especially against the most vulnerable: the slaves, the downtrodden, and the women. Even the Makkan nobles' children who had accepted Islam were not spared once the elite elders realized that persuasion based on appeal to blood ties

was ineffectual. This was a particularly hard blow to the self-esteem of those who were used to having their orders blindly obeyed, because their own children — sons and daughters who were in line to inherit their wealth and who would be the beneficiaries of the existing system — were rebelling against them. The fact that slaves were accepting Islam was not initially viewed by them as a big deal because not only could a new slave be bought in the market at any time, but also anything characteristic of the bottom classes was not considered to be respectable. However, the issue of their own children abandoning their way of life was something more worrisome. When exploiters cannot convince others by reason and logic, they resort to brute force. This is what the Makkan chiefs did.

To resist such pressure and oppression requires a life-program that would develop in its adherents the power to endure cruelty and torture with patience and perseverance. This must not be confused with passivity. Patience and perseverance are the necessary time and tools for disciplining the mind and freeing the conscience to separate what is right from what is wrong. Patience and perseverance are qualities that enable the committed Muslims to mentally break free of the chains of ideological bondage and develop spiritual fortitude so that, when the time is right, they can engage in the more demanding tasks of physically challenging and ultimately overthrowing the exploitative order without losing hope or falling back. Before that stage is reached however, many sacrifices have to be offered. These include suffering ridicule, isolation, deprivation, persecution, torture, exile, and even death.

The qualities of a great leader include not only setting a directional course to be pursued collectively for the realization of a clearly defined goal in life but also instilling in his followers an unshakable commitment to withstand every kind of pressure. This is what the noble Messenger (ﷺ) inspired in his followers. Prophets (ﷺ) are divinely appointed leaders whose impeccable characters were confirmed by the people to whom they were commissioned; they do not need approval from the prevalent power culture to acquire legitimacy. Their mission is not only to deliver the message but also to implement its teachings in the formulation of a new

society that places justice above status and disciplines the exercise of power with principle. Thus resistance from those who amass wealth and concentrate power by forcing class differentiation on society is only to be expected, but it has to be confronted, at times with words, and at times with war. Hence, while the prophet-leader must instill steely determination in his followers, he must also decide whether a head-on clash at a particular time is the most suitable course of action. In Makkah, this was not feasible because the small number of Muslims were still in the process of acculturating themselves into the new *dīn* and because they lacked a secure base of operations. Due to the peculiar situation in Makkah, the Prophet (ﷺ) had to consider other options to protect his followers.

When the persecution intensified and the Muslims' very survival was threatened, the noble Messenger (ﷺ) granted some of them permission to migrate to Abyssinia. When evaluated in the proper context, *hijrah* (migration) plays an important role in the struggle to liberate Muslims while simultaneously propagating the message of Islam. In the merciful Qur'an, Allah (ﷻ) opens up an alternate road for persecuted Muslims whose oppression becomes unbearable in their place of abode: migration to a more secure place. This is usually the option for Muslims who perceive themselves to be weak by virtue of their minority status and who become disadvantaged for that reason. On the other hand, the truly committed Muslims are generally not afflicted with a depreciation of confidence and have often overpowered much larger enemy forces (8:65–66).<sup>1</sup>

In the early days of Islam in Makkah, the Muslims were clearly a tiny minority. For the first three years after the beginning of the revelation, the Prophet (ﷺ) secretly conveyed the message of Islam to his close relatives and friends. A small group accepted the message and started to propagate it among their confidants, inviting them to the new *dīn*. When the message was openly proclaimed, it initially evoked ridicule but soon thereafter, it aroused the hostile reaction of the Makkan chiefs because they saw it as a direct challenge to their hereditary authority, their economic interests, and their political privileges. They started to persecute the Muslims not only to punish them but also to deter others from committing to

the principled positions espoused by the Prophet (ﷺ). The maltreatment and intimidation intensified so much that the Prophet (ﷺ) advised some of his companions to migrate to Abyssinia where the ruler was known to be just. He told them that they would find sanctuary there and should wait there until Allah (ﷻ) brought them some relief. It was in these circumstances that the Muslims were forced to flee Makkah.

Seeking relief for the oppressed Muslims was only one facet of the immigration to Abyssinia. Inherent in this act were other strategic objectives as well. The Prophet (ﷺ) was always working on multiple fronts. While his decision to allow the Muslims to migrate appeared to be motivated by his desire to alleviate their suffering, it was also a direct challenge to the established order in society. On learning that some Muslims had escaped their persecution, the Makkan chiefs were so upset that they sent a raiding party to intercept the fugitive Muslims and bring them back to Makkah before they could reach Jiddah and board a ship bound for Abyssinia. The Makkan power clique all along wanted to force the Muslims to abandon the *dīn* of Islam and their potentially successful escape would compromise this ambition. Thus, the Makkan elites were forced to react to what the Prophet (ﷺ) had done. This also explains why they later dispatched a delegation to Abyssinia to pressure the king there to extradite the Muslims back to Makkah.

Perhaps equally important was the new basis of relationship — fellowship based on commitment to Allah (ﷻ) rather than clan or family ties — that was established in society. Islam's powerful appeal in the incomparable cadence of the Qur'an and the patient resolve of the Prophet (ﷺ) even affected the children of some of the leading figures of Makkah as they were in the group that migrated to Abyssinia. What could be more humiliating for the Makkan chiefs than the fact that their own children had abandoned traditional Arabian culture in favor of a *dīn* that offered no material benefits or worldly privilege? Similarly, it would appear that the purpose was also to convey the message of Islam to people outside Makkah, indeed outside the Arabian Peninsula since the Qur'anic *āyāt* had already made clear that the Prophet (ﷺ) was sent as a mes-

senger for all mankind (7:158, 34:28, 21:92 among others). Before discussing the various aspects of the migration, let us consider the nature of society in Makkah when Islam was first proclaimed.

### **Makkan Society at the Advent of Islam**

Arabia was a tribal society during the days of *jāhiliyāh*. It enjoyed preeminence as an important commercial and trading center where goods were brought from all over Arabia and beyond for barter and sale. The Quraysh, being the principal tribe in Makkah, had taken control of the city during the time of Quṣayy, a forefather of the Prophet (ﷺ) from the Khuzā'ah tribe. The latter was ultimately pushed out of Makkah and settled in the southwest. Before the ascendance of the Quraysh, the Khuzā'ah, too, had wrested control of the city from the Jurhum tribe. Since Prophet Ismā'il's (ﷺ) wife was from Jurhum, he had decided to settle in the area.<sup>2</sup> It was Quṣayy who had turned Makkah into an important center for trade and commerce. Over time, Quṣayy's sons and grandchildren multiplied and spread into numerous clans.<sup>3</sup> While the Makkan society was far more organized than that of the nomadic tribes elsewhere in Arabia, life was still based on rather primitive notions. Blood vengeance, easy murder, and piracy without the slightest pretext and with little provocation were common. It was obvious that survival in such an environment required personal as well as family and clan power and influence.

The most important unit of sociopolitical organization was the clan, its modern equivalent being the nation-state in which the ruling elites display similar behavior to protect their vested interests. Thus it was the clan that provided protection for its members against other clans or from hostile groups and individuals. The stronger the clan, the greater its prestige and influence; weaker clans sought the protection of stronger ones and in turn supported their allied superiors in their quest to increase their power and influence. Clan solidarity demanded unconditional fealty for its members regardless of whether they had been wronged or wronged others. The individual, in turn, was required to be loyal to the clan;

he had to abide by such clan customs as defending fellow members in case they were attacked, defend their property, be prepared to kill to preserve clan honor or that of their homemade gods. With the exception of a few individuals, idolatry was the religion of all the clans in Makkah; indeed, it was the religion of most tribes in the Arabian Peninsula except in the extreme north (Syria) and south (Najrān and Oman) where the tribes had embraced Christianity under Byzantine influence.

Without clan protection, an individual was extremely vulnerable. This was especially true of those who had come from outside to settle in Makkah. Since they did not belong to any clan they had to, for security's sake, enter into a client relationship with a Makkan clan or some of its members. This was a fairly common practice in Makkah at the time; vulnerable individuals often sought the protection of powerful members of society. Once such protection was granted and publicly declared, the entire clan was bound by custom to aid the individual. Before Islam, slavery was also widespread in Arabia. People captured in battle or in raids were turned into slaves; they could be sold to other people if the master so wished. Slaves had few rights or protection. Women were similarly mistreated. Naturally, the powerful clans and their chiefs enjoyed additional privileges; in the lawless society of Arabia, they could mistreat people at will without any checks against such abuse.

This was the environment in which the message of Islam was proclaimed. The first responders to its call were also the most oppressed; naturally they found its equality and justice extremely compelling and attractive. They had nothing to lose and everything to gain: Islam offered them dignity by making them equal with others regardless of race, color, family, wealth, tribe, or social status in society. There were others, too, who were attracted to Islam: the children of some of the wealthy and powerful people, including the children of Makkan clan leaders. When their conversion became known, there was immediate rancor, resentment, and malevolence.

The slaves who accepted Islam were mercilessly tortured; some, like the husband and wife, Yāsir and Sumīyah (ﷺ), died



under extreme agony at the hands of members of the Makhzūm clan instigated by Abū Jahl, one of the most implacable enemies of Islam, who himself was killed in the Battle of Badr. Sumīyah, preceding her husband Yāsir in giving her life for Allah (ﷺ), became the first martyr of Islam. Bilāl (رضي الله عنه), an Abyssinian slave belonging to Umayyah ibn Khalaf (chief of the Jumah clan), was barbarously tortured, often dragged on the burning sand or left in the scorching sun of Makkah under the weight of a heavy boulder placed on his chest. He was rescued when Abū Bakr (رضي الله عنه), a wealthy companion of the Prophet (ﷺ), ransomed him. The fate of other Muslims was little better. Even the children of the wealthy were not spared; their own family members tortured them for breaking clan solidarity and abandoning the practices, behaviors, and social conventions of their forefathers. Thus, life for Muslims was extremely difficult in those early days of Islam.

Naturally, the persecution of his companions greatly distressed the Prophet (ﷺ). His uncle Abū Ṭālib, a respected elder of the Quraysh and head of Banū Hāshim, provided him protection, cushioning him from the more vicious attacks of the Quraysh, but the Prophet (ﷺ) had few means and little influence to protect his followers. He, therefore, advised them to migrate to Abyssinia whose king he said was known to be just and kind. Dr. Ḥamīdullāh has dealt at length with the question of why the Muslims went to Abyssinia and not anywhere else such as Syria or Persia to seek protection. The rulers of these lands were hostile to the Arabians and would not have offered the kind of protection that would be available in Abyssinia.<sup>4</sup> Mutually friendly diplomatic relations between Makkah and Abyssinia were established by one of the Prophet's (ﷺ) great uncles, 'Abd al-Shams, long before the advent of Islam.<sup>5</sup>

In the year of the Prophet's (ﷺ) birth, the Abyssinian governor of Yemen, Abrahah had attempted to destroy the Ka'bah but his army itself was destroyed when the elephant leading the charge was attacked by pebble-carrying birds forcing it to retreat in fright, trampling his soldiers.<sup>6</sup> The attack on the Ka'bah, however, was an exception to the cordial relations the Makkans had established with Abyssinian rulers across the Red Sea. The Negus Aṣṣham, who

was the ruler of Abyssinia when the first group of Muslims migrated there, has an interesting background. According to al-Suhaylī, Aṣḥam was heir to the Abyssinian throne but before he could ascend to it, one of his ambitious uncles sold him to an Arabian merchant while Aṣḥam was still a youth. He ended up in Arabia where he grazed the animals of a Ḍamraḥ tribesman in the Valley of Badr.<sup>7</sup> During his stay in Arabia, Aṣḥam established close personal relations with the Ḍamraḥ tribe as well as with Arabian merchants and became familiar with Arabian customs and traditions.

Perhaps his childhood experience and the injustices he suffered at the hands of his cruel uncle strengthened his understanding of the importance of fairness and justice and thus when he became the ruler, he ensured that he would uphold both. Given the frequent visits by merchants from Makkah to Abyssinia, this information must have reached the Prophet (ﷺ) as well. Dr. Ḥamīdullāh speculates that the Prophet (ﷺ) might even have traveled there at some time in his life since he is known to have used some words of the Abyssinian language<sup>8</sup> but this writer has not come across any sources that would substantiate the Prophet (ﷺ) having ever visited Abyssinia.

### **Migration to Abyssinia**

The first group of Muslims left Makkah for Abyssinia in the month of Rajab in the 5th year of the Prophet's (ﷺ) mission. It consisted of 11 men and 4 women.<sup>9</sup> 'Uthmān ibn 'Affān (رضي الله عنه), married to the Prophet's (ﷺ) daughter Ruqayyah (رضي الله عنها), led the first group while Ja'far ibn Abī Ṭālib (رضي الله عنه), the Prophet's (ﷺ) cousin, led the second. Altogether, some 101 men and women migrated to Abyssinia. One-third of them stayed there for as long as 15 years, prominently among them Ja'far, and returned to Madinah in early 7AH when the Prophet (ﷺ) was leading an expedition against the Yahūdī stronghold at Khaybar. This campaign was launched soon after the Treaty of Ḥudaybiyah was signed with the Makkan chiefs at the end of 6AH. The treaty provided Muslims some respite from their traditional foes who had tortured and humiliated them for 13 years in

Makkah and then fought numerous battles against them once the Muslims had migrated to Madinah. This treaty brought about a dramatic shift in the political and strategic situation of Muslims.

Ibn Hishām and al-Ṭabarī as well as other historians have listed the names of those who migrated to Abyssinia. What is worth noting here is that while the Muslims were permitted by the Prophet (ﷺ) to leave Makkah, the majority of those who left were children of the well-established families and clans. For instance, they included people like ‘Uthmān ibn ‘Affān (رضي الله عنه) of the Umayyāh (or ‘Abd al-Shams) clan, as well as Umm Ḥabībāh (رضي الله عنها), daughter of Abū Sufyān, one of the leading figures of Makkah and head of the Umayyāh clan. Then there was Abū Ḥudhayfah (رضي الله عنه), son of ‘Utbaḥ ibn Rabī‘ah, another prominent Makkan notable of the Umayyāh clan. Abū Ḥudhayfah’s wife Sahlāh (رضي الله عنها) was the daughter of Suhayl ibn ‘Amr, chief of the ‘Āmir clan, the person who gained prominence when he signed the Treaty of Ḥudaybiyah on behalf of the Quraysh in the 6th year of the Hijrah. Umm Salamāh (رضي الله عنها), married to Abū Salamāh ibn ‘Abd al-Asad (رضي الله عنه) of the Makhzūm clan, was the daughter of Abū Umayyāh ibn al-Mughīrah, another prominent figure of the same clan. Muṣ‘ab ibn ‘Umayr (رضي الله عنه), son of a rich Makkan family of the ‘Abd al-Dār clan also went to Abyssinia though he returned not long thereafter to Makkah. We find that he was appointed by the Prophet (ﷺ) to go to Madinah after the First Pact of ‘Aqabah, two years before the Prophet’s (ﷺ) migration, to propagate the message of Islam and to teach the Qur’ān to the new Muslims there. Muṣ‘ab (رضي الله عنه) was martyred in the Battle of Uhud. Similarly, ‘Uthmān ibn ‘Affān (رضي الله عنه) returned not long thereafter with his wife Ruqayyāh (رضي الله عنها).<sup>10</sup>

Members of virtually every clan in Makkah migrated to Abyssinia.<sup>11</sup> There were both men and women in the migrating groups but there was not a single person who was not local to Makkah. Bilāl ibn Rabāḥ (رضي الله عنه), the Abyssinian slave and a close companion of the Prophet (ﷺ) who became the first *mu’adhdhin* of Islam, for instance, or Khabbāb ibn al-Arat (رضي الله عنه), another outsider living in Makkah, did not go to Abyssinia. Some reports mention ‘Ammār ibn Yāsir (رضي الله عنه) as being among those who went, but both

Ibn Hishām<sup>12</sup> and al-Ṭabarī<sup>13</sup> have questioned such claims. His parents were both tortured to death, becoming the first martyrs of Islam, and ‘Ammār (ﷺ) was still a minor when the migration to Abyssinia took place. True, there were children that accompanied their parents to Abyssinia, but the orphan ‘Ammār (ﷺ) most probably remained in Makkah. This is also consistent with the fact that he participated in the construction of al-Masjid al-Nabawī in Madinah and when the companions overloaded him with bricks, he cried out, “You are killing me.”<sup>14</sup>

What is surprising about the migration to Abyssinia is the absence of Bilāl (رضي الله عنه) and others of the lower classes of Makkah from the group; after all, he was mercilessly tortured in Makkah. Being originally from Abyssinia, it would have been both logical as well as strategic to send him to the court of the Abyssinian king to plead the case of the persecuted Muslims at the hands of the Makkan chiefs. Bilāl’s (رضي الله عنه) appearance in the Abyssinian court would have immediately won over the king’s sympathies but the Prophet (ﷺ) did not choose this course. Instead, the children of only the well-to-do families in Makkah were sent to Abyssinia. There was only one person — Abū Bakr (رضي الله عنه) — whom the Prophet (ﷺ) specifically prevented from leaving when he expressed the desire to do so because the Prophet (ﷺ) needed him at his side.

A more insightful look at the Prophet’s (ﷺ) approach reveals certain important prerogatives. First, the Prophet (ﷺ) was confident that the Negus would accept the Muslim refugees, provide them protection and deal with them in a fair and just manner regardless of who presented the Muslims’ case. Second, sending the children of the Makkan elites to Abyssinia had another, albeit unstated purpose apart from saving them from persecution and torture: to challenge the system founded upon clan and family loyalties. The departure of Muslims from Makkah also conveyed a clear message to the Qurayshī chiefs that no longer would their Muslim children be driven by adherence to clan loyalties; instead they would now be linked together through something much higher and far nobler: the bond of Islamic brotherhood. It was a paradigm shift in the relations between the people and their society. While blood loyalties could

not be suffocated altogether, the basis of relationship became a commitment to Allah's (ﷻ) command and counsel rather than to any of His earthly rivals — family, clan, or king. This was bound to upset the Makkan elites, and it did. This explains why they sent bounty hunters to intercept and bring the escapees back to Makkah before they could board a boat for Abyssinia. When they failed in this attempt, the Makkan chiefs sent a two-member delegation to the Abyssinian king requesting the extradition of Muslim refugees.

The migration of Muslims to Abyssinia was, in a sense, a prelude to the transposition of the *qiblah* from Makkah to al-Quds (Jerusalem), which lasted for about 16 months in Madinah before returning to Makkah once and for all. Making Jerusalem the *qiblah* for a short time was Allah's (ﷻ) way of decentralizing and denationalizing Makkah in the eyes of the Muslims, **“And We have not rendered a previous *qiblah* for you [O Prophet] except to distinguish those who follow the Apostle from those who are inclined to retreat [into tradition]” (2:143).**

The pre-Islamic and unscriptured Arabians felt they owned Makkah and the House of Allah (ﷻ) within. For them, Makkah was a symbol of national pride and glory; they considered it their capital and the seat of their power. They felt about Makkah the same way the Jews feel about Jerusalem, or the way the Americans feel about Washington, or the way the Catholics feel about the Vatican; and they venerated the Ka'bah with the same sense of ritual honor that the Christians revere the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, or that the Americans esteem their White House. Makkah had lost all of its ideological significance because these Arabians had lost their ideological attachment to Ibrāhīm (ﷺ); and thus they observed a purely cultural, traditional, and customary relationship with the Haram. But Makkah was meant to be an ideological *qiblah*, not a cultural capital or a “religious” retreat strictly reserved for Arabians. Makkah was supposed to be transnational, post-cultural, and beyond Arabian exclusivism.

Makkah was constructed and populated in response to Ibrāhīm's (ﷺ) supplication that from his progeny should come a prophet who would bring all humanity into conformity with

Allah's (ﷻ) will. Muhammad (ﷺ) was chosen by Allah (ﷻ) to complete Ibrāhīm's (ﷺ) mission by renewing the dedication of those who would, once again, carry the mantle of Ibrāhīm (ﷺ) and his inclusivist character in the place where revelation was rooted. Unlike Jerusalem which was turned into an exclusivist and exclusionary Yahūdī-Israeli enclave, thereby forcing the withdrawal of the Covenant from Banū Isrā'īl, Makkah would resume its role as the launch point of Abrahamic (Islamic) universalism, carried forth by the new Muslim covenant-bearers.

The early Muslims had to make the transition from tradition to *taqwā*, from customs to commitment, and from culture to covenant. They had to shed their “national pride” for Islamic commitment tolerates no nuance of cultural, communal, or racial preferences. Being the models for those who would potentially accept Islam later on, these Muslims could not afford to carry any nationalistic or tribal baggage; they had to cleanse themselves of all kinds of *‘aṣabīyah* — racism, ethnicism, tribalism, sexism — because these “isms” could boomerang with devastating consequences capable of undermining Islamic standards of justice and equality. By sending some of the early Muslims to Abyssinia, the Prophet (ﷺ) was detaching these cultural Arabians from their Makkan heritage and removing them from the cultural and exclusionary tendencies that were associated with an insular Makkah and racist Arabians. This would have been hardest for those who had a strong sense of self, that is, the aristocratic Muslims who were used to receiving facilitation from their culture and lineage, who were used to being protected by their tribes, and who were used to an upper class position and the opportunities that go along with it. It is not easy for an individual, especially one who has “all the perks” to shed his national or ethnic character and acquire a cosmopolitan Islamic character. The journey to Abyssinia, where they would have no such luxuries, was meant to force them to rely only on Allah (ﷻ) and His guidance, and hence transform them from local Arabians to universalist Muslims. This also had the added benefit of weeding out those who were incapable of separating culture, geography, tribe, and ethnicity from the commitment to Allah (ﷻ).

Finally, because it is hard for people of influence to subsume their ego to the influence of another, this was a test of their loyalty to the Prophet (ﷺ). These aristocratic Arabians had to choose between clinging to their culture and obeying the Prophet (ﷺ), and between their Arabian heritage, despite its historical Abrahamic origins, and a new Islamic order; they could not belong to both. By going to Abyssinia, they were proving their loyalty to the Prophet (ﷺ) — a leader by virtue of revelation, scripture, and Allah's (ﷻ) commission.

Islam's purpose is and always has been to bring humanity under the protective umbrella of divine guidance by eliminating *jāhili* practices from society. If the adherents of such practices refuse to rectify their errant ways, then other means must be used to correct them. This is what was required in Makkah as well. Perhaps the migration of Muslims from Makkah was part of the shock therapy that had to be administered to make the Quraysh realize that their own family members were abandoning them for the sake of Islam. It is not difficult to imagine the consternation felt by people like Abū Sufyān, Abū Umayyah ibn al-Mughīrah and Suhayl ibn 'Amr whose own daughters accompanied their Muslim husbands to Abyssinia. They were the leading figures of Makkah and if their children — daughters, at that — abandoned them, then there was something seriously wrong with their values and the system they had created. Similarly, it signified the great attraction Islam had despite its inability to provide protection or any immediate material benefits; it promised only Allah's (ﷻ) satisfaction and delayed gratification in the life to be lived in Paradise. Material acquisition for the purpose of gaining temporal power is not Islam's primary purpose anyway; it strives to achieve balance in society by discouraging *isrāf* (excessive consumption) and promoting the concept of sharing and caring, all in the ceaseless effort to please Allah (ﷻ).

In the early days of Islam, being a Muslim meant having to endure great physical hardships; in the confidence-building words of the Qur'an, Allah (ﷻ) says He will test those who make the unconditional commitment,

**Do people reckon that they will be left [at ease] just because they say, “We have faith,” and will not be tested with affliction? Verily, We put those who were before you through ordeals. Thus, Allah knows those who are sincere [to their commitment] and knows those who merely feign [commitment] (29:2–3).**

But those who came into the fold of Islam accepted these sacrifices for the promise of a better life in the hereafter. Islam did not call for the abandonment of life per se, as Imam ‘Alī (ؑ) has said, “*Zuhd* is not that you possess nothing of this world, but that nothing of this world possesses you.”<sup>15</sup> The departure of such a large number of Muslims from Makkah only intensified the persecution of those who stayed behind. This was the Qurayshī way of getting back at them. Despite the resilience of the Makkan Muslims to the Quraysh’s barbarism and the futility of torture as a reconditioning tool, the Quraysh continued to pull no punches in their relentless antipathy toward the Muslims.

Both Hadith and Sirāḥ scholars agree that the Makkan emissaries tried to poison the ear of the Negus against the Muslims so as to have them extradited back to Makkah. The Abyssinian king refused to accede to their demand without giving the Muslims the opportunity to explain their case. We shall revert to this encounter in the king’s court a little later and also consider the contents of the Prophet’s (ﷺ) letter delivered to the king. First we must briefly examine the nature of the Arabic language and its written form in Makkah at the time because it sheds light on the Prophet’s (ﷺ) great care in his dealings with others by committing all important communiques and agreements to writing.

### **Introduction of the Written Script in Makkah**

The people of Makkah became familiar with writing skills shortly before the advent of Islam.<sup>16</sup> As a predominantly nomadic society, what existed was a strong oral tradition emphasizing listening abilities and memory power over written skills, dating back hundreds of



years. Even so, with the emergence of Islam, the vision of the Prophet (ﷺ), and Allah's (ﷻ) strictures in the Qur'an about preserving this last revelation for all times to come, the written script for the language became established fairly quickly,<sup>17</sup>

**Read in the name of your Sustainer, who has created man out of a [physical and emotional] fusion. Read, for your Sustainer is the Most Bountiful One who has taught [man] the use of the pen, taught man what he did not know! (96:1–5).**

**Behold, it is We Ourselves who have bestowed from on high, step by step, this consciousness; and, behold, it is We who shall truly guard it [from all corruption] (15:9).**

Numerous scholars have also dealt with the details of development of the Arabic language.<sup>18</sup> Others have highlighted examples of specific problems to make the point.<sup>19</sup> As with other languages, multiple dialects of Arabic existed at the time, however, the Makkan dialect ultimately prevailed because of Islam and the fact that Qur'anic revelations were written in it. Even with so few people able to read and write at the time, as the *āyāt* were revealed to him, the Prophet (ﷺ) instructed his companions to write them down, thus not only ensuring the survival of the Makkan dialect over others but more importantly preserving the authenticity of the Qur'an.

Paper, at this point of history, had not yet reached Arabia, so dried animal skins and bones such as camels' shoulder blades were used instead. The membrane of animal skins served the need for important correspondence. Papyrus made its way into the heart of Arabia shortly before the Prophet (ﷺ) passed on. It was used for correspondence during the time of the second *khalifah*, 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭab (رضي الله عنه), indicating that it had become familiar to Muslims in Madinah within a few years of the consolidation of the power of Islam. The many letters 'Umar (رضي الله عنه) sent to his governors in the expanding Islamic State were written on papyrus.<sup>20</sup>

### Earliest Compilation of Letters and Documents

As the revealed Word of Allah (ﷻ), the Qur'an is the principal source of knowledge and guidance in all spheres of human endeavor. It is also the primary source for studying and understanding the Sīrah of the noble Messenger of Allah (ﷺ); everything else is secondary and must conform to the commands of the noble Book. There are, however, other sources as well that provide insights into the life of the Prophet (ﷺ) and the emergence of Islam, such as the Hadith and Sīrah literature. Another area needing greater attention than has hitherto been the case concerns the Prophet's (ﷺ) correspondence and the treaties formulated under his command. He sent many letters to various rulers, signed treaties with the tribes in Arabia, and prepared important documents such as the Covenant of Madinah, which established peace and orderly conduct in the Madinan city-state under the overall power and authority of the Prophet (ﷺ). He was recognized as the undisputed leader and ruler of Madinah.

Hundreds of such documents are mentioned in Sīrah books. At least four original letters are extant and preserved in the museums and archives of Muslim countries or in the possession of individuals. This is one of the most remarkable aspects of the Prophet's (ﷺ) mission: his meticulous care in writing everything, such as the revelations, letters and treaties, even though writing skills were not fully developed and there were only a handful of people who could read and write at the time. One group of scholars has listed 17 individuals<sup>21</sup> while others have mentioned 48 persons who were capable of recording and transcribing.<sup>22</sup> Nearly 300 documents, letters and treaties of the Prophet (ﷺ) have been identified in Hadith and Sīrah books. The first person to compile such documents was 'Amr ibn Ḥazm al-Anṣārī (رضي الله عنه), a companion of the noble Messenger (ﷺ) known for his literary skills.<sup>23</sup> His original work is no longer in existence but its contents have been reproduced elsewhere.<sup>24</sup> A careful study of these documents would yield a better understanding of the Sīrah and how the Prophet (ﷺ) conducted negotiations, especially with the rulers of distant lands. These documents and letters are also referenced in numerous history books.<sup>25</sup>

The first such letter, commented on by al-Ṭabarī, Ibn al-Qayyim, and Ibn Kathīr, is addressed to the Negus, the king of Abyssinia.<sup>26</sup> Scholars, however, differ regarding its contents. Ibn Kathīr mentions two separate letters.<sup>27</sup> He quotes from *al-Dalā'il* of al-Bayhaqī<sup>28</sup> that the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) sent a letter to the Negus in the hand of Ja'far ibn Abī Ṭālib (رضي الله عنه). He quotes the letter in full, although a little earlier, he states that at the time of the Muslims' migration, the person who ruled Abyssinia was not named Aṣḥam. This appears to be an error since all historians and Hadith scholars identify him as Aṣḥam or Aṣḥamaḥ, and his name is also confirmed by the letters the Prophet (ﷺ) sent to him. There are different versions of this letter. In his *al-Siraḥ al-Nabawīyah*, Ibn Kathīr reproduces a letter from al-Bayhaqī that has a Prophetic Seal at the end. There is also a quotation of an *āyah* from *Sūrah Āl 'Imrān*. Both the Prophetic Seal and the *āyah* point to the fact that this letter was the one the noble Messenger (ﷺ) sent at the beginning of the 7th year of the Hijrah when letters were sent to a number of rulers. *Sūrah Āl 'Imrān* was revealed in Madinah, not in Makkah. The following letter shown in Exhibit 1 is quoted in Ibn Kathīr's *al-Siraḥ al-Nabawīyah* (translated into English by Professor Trevor Le Gassick and published under the title, *The Life of the Prophet Muhammad* (ﷺ), Volumes I–IV).<sup>29</sup>

### Contents of the First Letter

The seal of the Prophet (ﷺ) appears at the bottom of the text. Pictured in Exhibit 2, it is in the form of a one-inch diameter ring consisting of three lines inscribed in ascending order, reading *Muhammad Rasūl-Allah*. While discussing the contents of the letter, Ibn Kathīr observes, "Al-Bayhaqī related it thus after the narrative of the migration to Abyssinia." He then offers his personal opinion,

There are various opinions concerning this account. It is clear that this document was sent to the Negus, who in addition to being a Muslim, [was also] the friend of Ja'far and his companions. It relates to the time when he

**Exhibit 1** – Letter sent to the Negus by the Prophet (ﷺ), after he concluded the Treaty of Ḥudaybiyah in 6AH and then subsequently sent letters to all the major rulers of the day in early 7AH.

In the name of Allah, the Mercy-Giving, the Merciful.

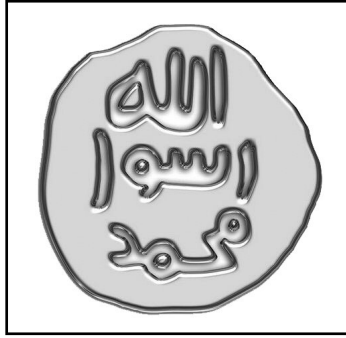
This is a letter from Muhammad the Prophet to the Negus, al-Aṣḥam, the great leader of Abyssinia.

Peace be upon those who follow guidance, securely commit to Allah and His Messenger, and I testify that there is no deity/authority but Allah alone, who has no rival [in dominion and rule], who took no female partner for Himself, and who has no begotten child, and who testify that Muhammad is His conforming servant and His Messenger.

I call on you with the inspirational message of Islam, for I am Allah's Messenger. So yield [to Him] and be at peace! **“O People of the Book, let us come to a common understanding between us both: that we will conform to none but Allah; and associate no rival with Him [in dominion and rule]; and that none of us will consider others as masters to the exclusion of Allah. But if you do turn aside, then say, ‘Bear witness that we are Muslims’” (3:64).** But if you refuse, then upon you is the sin of those of your people who are Christians.

[Muhammad (ﷺ)] wrote to all the rulers on earth inviting them to Allah (ﷻ) shortly before the conquest (of Makkah). He wrote to Heraclius, the head of the Romans and the Caesar of Syria, to Chosroe, the king of the Persians, to the ruler of Egypt as well as to the Negus.<sup>30</sup>

**Exhibit 2** – The seal of the Prophet (ﷺ).



Ibn Kathir also quotes Imam al-Zuhrī,

The letters to them [the rulers] from the Prophet (ﷺ) were all the same, that is, copies, and all quoted the same *āyah* which comes from *Sūrah Āl ‘Imrān*, a chapter that is incontrovertibly from the Madinah period. The *āyah* comes from the early part of the *sūrah*.

In order to emphasize the point that this letter could not have been sent at the time when Ja‘far ibn Abī Ṭālib (رضي الله عنه) was leaving for Abyssinia, Ibn Kathīr makes the following observation about the *āyāt* from *Sūrah Āl ‘Imrān*,

Eighty-three *āyāt* of this *sūrah*, from its beginning, relate to the delegation from Najrān, as I asserted in my *tafsīr* [exegesis]. And to Allah belongs all praise and credit.

And so this document was to the second Negus, not to the first...<sup>31</sup>

What can be stated with certainty is that the *āyāt* quoted in the letter were revealed in Madinah, so this particular letter could not have been sent from Makkah. The Christian delegation from Najrān had come to Madinah to debate with the Prophet (ﷺ) in

the ninth year of the Hijrah.<sup>32</sup> Clearly, these *āyāt* could not have been quoted in a letter sent to the Negus by the Prophet (ﷺ) from Makkah when they were not even revealed yet. Similarly, there is broad agreement among the scholars that the Prophetic Seal was made at the time when the Prophet (ﷺ) sent letters to various rulers at the beginning of the 7th year of the Hijrah, following the Treaty of Ḥudaybiyah.

### Contents of the Second Letter

Ibn Kathīr then narrates a second letter, again quoting al-Bayhaqī who traces it through a chain of narrators to Muḥammad ibn Ishāq, the Prophet's (ﷺ) biographer, who said, "The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) sent 'Amr ibn Umayyah al-Ḍamrī with a letter to the Negus concerning Ja'far ibn Abī Ṭālib and his companions." The letter, which ends with the Prophetic Seal, is given in Exhibit 3. The text of this letter is similar to that cited in al-Ṭabarī. Quoting al-Ṭabarī, Dr. Ḥamīdullāh expresses the opinion that some scholars have probably conjoined two different letters,<sup>33</sup> especially the penultimate paragraph referring to the Prophet's (ﷺ) cousin Ja'far ibn Abī Ṭālib (رضي الله عنه), inaccurately translated as *nephew* in Trevor Le Gassick's English translation of Ibn Kathīr's *al-Sīrah al-Nabawīyah*. All the scholars of *tafsīr* and *Sīrah* agree that Ja'far (رضي الله عنه) went to Abyssinia in the fifth year of the Prophet's (ﷺ) mission<sup>34</sup> and that the letters to various rulers were sent in the early part of 7AH after the Treaty of Ḥudaybiyah was signed at the end of the 6th year of the Hijrah.

There is also difference of opinion among scholars regarding the bearer of this letter to the Negus. Was the letter delivered by 'Amr ibn Umayyah al-Ḍamrī, as stated in al-Bayhaqī's *al-Dalā'il*? While most historians — al-Ṭabarī, Ibn Sa'd, Ibn Kathīr and others — do not name the person who delivered the letter, Dr. Ḥamīdullāh, who has dealt with the issue in some detail, suggests that 'Amr is the one most likely to have carried the correspondence above. He points out that 'Amr ibn Umayyah al-Ḍamrī had close relations both with the 'Abd al-Shams and al-Muṭṭalib clans and had married the daughter of 'Ubaydah ibn al-Ḥārith ibn 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib, a cousin

**Exhibit 3** – A letter attributed to the Prophet (ﷺ), that Dr. Ḥamīdullāh suggests erroneously combines an earlier (Makkan) and a later (Madinan) letter to the Negus of Abyssinia.

In the name of Allah, the Mercy-Giving, the Merciful.

From Muhammad, Messenger of Allah, to the Negus al-Aṣḥam, king of Abyssinia.

May you be secure. I express to you my praises for Allah, the one authority/deity besides whom there is none, the Sovereign, the All-Holy, the Source of Peace, and the Foundation of Faith. I testify that Jesus is *Rūḥ-Allah* and His Word that He cast unto Mary, the good, chaste, unviolated virgin. And so she bore Jesus, whom Allah created from His *rūḥ* and His breath, just as He created Adam by His hand and His breath. I call upon you to commit to the One God who has no associate. To Him all obedience is due. Follow me, believe in me as well as in that which has come down to me for I am the Messenger of Allah.

I have sent to you my cousin Ja'far along with a group of Muslims. When he comes to you, receive them hospitably. Do not be haughty for I invite you and your forces to Allah. I have conveyed my message and given advice. So accept my advice.

Peace be upon those who follow the guiding path!

of the Prophet (ﷺ) who was martyred in the Battle of Badr. As stated earlier, the Prophet's (ﷺ) great uncle, 'Abd al-Shams, had obtained trading rights from the rulers of Abyssinia and these would naturally have been extended to their allies as well. According to

Dr. Ḥamīdullāh,<sup>35</sup> ‘Amr had on numerous occasions gone with trading caravans to Abyssinia and appears to have established friendly relations with the Negus Aṣḥam. In fact, it cannot be ruled out, as Dr. Ḥamīdullāh suggests<sup>36</sup> that he may have cultivated close links with Aṣḥam when the latter was in Arabia as a slave of an Arabian merchant of the Ḍamrah tribe.

At the time of the first immigration to Abyssinia in the 5th year of the Prophet’s (ﷺ) mission while he was still in Makkah, there is no reason to believe that the Prophet (ﷺ) would send another person with a letter to introduce his cousin Ja’far (رضي الله عنه) to the king. Ja’far (رضي الله عنه), very much beloved to the Prophet (ﷺ), was both handsome and very eloquent. Again, Dr. Ḥamīdullāh helps clarify the issue. He quotes in full the first letter sent to the Negus through his cousin Ja’far ibn Abī Ṭālib (رضي الله عنه). We reproduce this in Exhibit 4 in order to remove any ambiguity.

Dr. Ḥamīdullāh points out that the last sentence in the penultimate paragraph (in brackets) has probably been taken from another letter, arguing that if this particular letter was of an introductory nature and was sent to seek protection for the Muslims, it would be inappropriate to use such language at this stage. This may have been used in a subsequent letter when the successor to the Negus Aṣḥam rejected the message of Islam. It is reported in Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim that the ruler who succeeded Aṣḥam to the throne of Abyssinia did not accept Islam.<sup>37</sup>

It is not clear when Ja’far (رضي الله عنه) presented the Prophet’s (ﷺ) letter to the Abyssinian king. Was it done immediately upon arrival in Abyssinia? If so, why would the king ask the Muslims to explain what their new faith was on the prodding of ‘Amr ibn al-ʿĀṣ who was hoping the Muslims’ response would upset the king? On the other hand, if it was not presented to the king immediately upon their arrival, how did the Muslims manage to live in Abyssinia without being noticed? They were Arabs who were of fairer complexion and would have easily stood out among the dark-skinned Abyssinians. The *Sirah* books are silent on this point. What can be reasonably assumed is that initially they may have been mistaken for Arabian traders. Travel between Arabia



**Exhibit 4** – The first letter sent by the Prophet (ﷺ), while he was still in Makkah, to the Negus of Abyssinia.

In the name of Allah, the Mercy-Giving, the Merciful.

From Muhammad, the Messenger of Allah, to the Negus,  
the great leader of Abyssinia.

I address you after praising Allah, beside whom there is nobody worthy of your conformity. He is the Absolute, the Pure, the Guardian [of everyone], and who protects from all difficulties and calamities.

I bear witness that Jesus, son of Mary, is the *rūḥ* of Allah and His Word that He cast unto Mary, the good, chaste, unviolated virgin. And so she bore Jesus, whom He created from His *Rūḥ* and His breath, just as He created Adam by His hand and His breath.

I call upon you to commit to the One God who has no partners/rivals. To Him all obedience is due. Follow me, commit [unreservedly] to me as well as in that which has come down to me for I am the Messenger of Allah.

I invite you and your army to securely commit to Allah who is Almighty and Glorious. I have conveyed the message of Allah to you and advised you. Now it is up to you to accept (or reject) this advice.

I have sent to you my cousin Ja'far along with a group of Muslims. When they come to you, receive them hospitably. [And do not be haughty].

Peace be upon those who follow the true path!<sup>38</sup>

and Abyssinia was common. But it is highly unlikely that Ja'far (ﷺ) would have delayed presenting the Prophet's (ﷺ) letter to the king. It was a sacred trust from the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) and Ja'far (ﷺ) would have made every effort to deliver it to the intended recipient at the first opportunity. It is possible that when Ja'far (ﷺ) presented the letter, the Negus may have assumed that they perhaps belonged to another sect of Christianity of which there were many at the time. It is also possible he may have presented the letter after the encounter in the court when the Muslims were questioned about their *dīn* and during which he recited *āyāt* from the Qur'an about Mary and Jesus (ﷺ). What is clearly established is that the king developed a liking for Ja'far (ﷺ) after that court encounter because of his eloquence and truthfulness. The Negus also accepted Islam, as confirmed in his own words in the letter he sent to the noble Messenger (ﷺ).

On the other hand, he obviously viewed the delegation representing the overlords of Makkah with a healthy amount of circumspection. Of the two Makkan emissaries sent to Abyssinia bearing precious gifts, there is consensus among Islamic researchers about the first — 'Amr ibn al-Āṣ of the Sahm clan — but there is some confusion regarding the second. Was it 'Umārah ibn al-Walid (of the Makhzūm clan), as stated by 'Urwaḥ ibn al-Zubayr in his recently discovered book *Maghāzī Rasūl-Allah*,<sup>39</sup> and by Ibn Kathīr in *al-Bidāyah wa-al-Nihāyah*?<sup>40</sup> Or, was it 'Abdullāh ibn Abī Rabī'ah of the 'Abd al-Shams clan, as narrated by Ibn Ishāq<sup>41</sup> and al-Ṭabarī?<sup>42</sup> Dr. Ḥamīdullāh clarifies the issue. He has pointed out that on the first occasion, the Makkan delegation consisted of 'Amr ibn al-Āṣ and 'Abdullāh ibn Abī Rabī'ah.<sup>43</sup> It was after the Battle of Badr that the Makkans sent another delegation to the Negus to make one more attempt to have the Muslims extradited, this time consisting again of 'Amr ibn al-Āṣ, who was accompanied by 'Umārah ibn al-Walid.<sup>44</sup>

The purpose of the first Makkan mission dispatched to Abyssinia was to portray the Muslims as criminals who should be deported back to Makkah to pay for their crimes. Instead of approaching the king directly, the Makkan delegation first contacted the Christian patriarch and other high priests, winning them

over with costly presents and misrepresentations about the Muslims as rabble-rousers and agitators. Then they approached the Negus, but the latter, as would befit a person known for justice and fairness, refused to accede to their extradition request without giving the Muslims an equal opportunity to represent themselves and their *dīn*. Repeated attempts by the Makkan emissaries, especially ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ to create doubts in the mind of the king failed. Ja‘far ibn Abī Ṭālib (ﷺ) spoke on behalf of the Muslims. While he had faced no physical abuse in Makkah because his father Abū Ṭālib, a very respected and noble member of the Makkan society, had protected him, the Prophet (ﷺ) sent him with the emigrants because of his knowledge and eloquence. When the Negus asked him about the new *dīn* that was not Christianity, Ja‘far (ﷺ) spoke in a manner that is rarely equaled in recorded history,

O king, we were a people steeped in ignorance, applying [our supplications] to idols, eating [improperly] slaughtered carrion, indulging in abomination, and the strong would devour the weak. Thus we were, until Allah sent to us a messenger from our midst, one whose lineage we knew, [along with] his veracity and his worthiness of trust and his integrity. He called us unto Allah, that we should testify to His Oneness and conform to Him and renounce what we and our fathers had conformed to in the forms of stones and idols; and he commanded us to speak truly, to fulfill our promises, to respect the ties of kinship and the rights of our neighbors, and to refrain from crimes and from bloodshed. So we [now] conform to Allah alone, setting none [as rivals or peers] beside Him, counting as forbidden what He has forbidden and as permissible what He has allowed. For these reasons have our people turned against us, and have persecuted us to make us forsake our [new] standard of living and revert back from the conformity in Allah to the hand-sculptured renditions [of Him]. That is why we have come to your country, having chosen you above all others; and we have been happy in

your protection, and it is our hope, O king, that here, with you, we shall suffer no wrong.<sup>45</sup>

The Negus was visibly moved by what he heard and rejected the Makkans' extradition request, much to the chagrin of his own priests and advisors. While disappointed at this failure, 'Amr ibn al-ʿĀṣ did not give up and decided to make another attempt at making the Muslims look bad. The following day he asked the king whether he was aware of the Muslims' belief about Prophet Jesus and his mother Mary (ﷺ). 'Amr thought this would surely turn the king against the Muslims since the Qur'anic rendition is different from the biblical narrations the king apparently believed in. The Negus once again summoned the Muslims to hear what they had to say about the Prophet Jesus (ﷺ). Upon acquaintance with the king's purpose, the displaced Muslims conferred with each other and decided they should speak the truth regardless of the consequences. Once again, Ja'far ibn Abī Ṭālib (رضي الله عنه) stepped forward and recited the *āyāt* of *Sūrah Maryam*<sup>46</sup> that had been revealed only a little before their escape from Makkah. When Ja'far (رضي الله عنه) finished reciting, the Negus along with his courtiers and priests were in tears. The Negus confirmed confidently, "This has truly come from the same source as that which commissioned Jesus." Then he assertively turned to the two Qurayshī envoys, "You may go, for by God, I will not deliver them to you; they shall not be betrayed."<sup>47</sup> It is reported that the Negus embraced Islam, in Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī (Hadith #1236) and Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim (Hadith #1585),<sup>48</sup> although he kept it secret because of the uncertain conditions in his country, especially the opposition he faced from the priests.

Several years later the Negus, acting on instructions from the Prophet (ﷺ), facilitated the Prophet's (ﷺ) marriage to Umm Ḥabībah (رضي الله عنها), presenting to her 400 *dirhams* in *mahr* on behalf of the noble Messenger (ﷺ).<sup>49</sup> Her husband, 'Ubaydullāh ibn Jaḥsh (of the northern Asad tribe that was allied to 'Abd al-Shams), with whom she had migrated, had become a Christian, later passing away in Abyssinia. Umm Ḥabībah's (رضي الله عنها) marriage to the Prophet (ﷺ) took place long after his migration to Madinah. When the Negus Aṣḥam

died, power was transferred to his cousin whose name apparently was also Aṣḥam. The Prophet (ﷺ) offered funeral prayers in absentia for the elder Negus<sup>50</sup> but as Dr. Ḥamīdullāh points out, this was much after the Hijrah.<sup>51</sup>

Ibn Kathīr also narrates from al-Bayhaqī that the Negus was overjoyed by the Muslims' victory at Badr in Ramaḍān 2AH. He sent for Ja'far (رضي الله عنه) and the other Muslims to convey to them the glad tidings and also to express his own gratitude to Allah (ﷻ) for this great victory.<sup>52</sup> There is also a reply from the Negus to the Prophet's (ﷺ) letter, recorded by al-Ṭabarī on the authority of Ibn Ishāq, and referred to by Dr. Ḥamīdullāh.<sup>53</sup> Ibn Kathīr has also made reference to it.<sup>54</sup> The letter is reproduced in Exhibit 5. Together with the letter, the Negus sent gifts to the Prophet (ﷺ). As was his habit, the noble Messenger (ﷺ) always responded to such gestures with even greater kindness and sent gifts to the king in return. However, before these reached him, the Negus died. This was in the 9th year of the Hijrah;<sup>55</sup> both Imams Muslim and al-Tirmidhī state that the Prophet (ﷺ) then sent a letter to his successor inviting him to Islam.<sup>56</sup> Imam Aḥmad ibn Hanbal states that the new king did not show much sympathy for Muslims, nor did he accept Islam.<sup>57</sup>

### ‘Amr ibn Umayyāh al-Ḍamrī

Let us now return to the issue of the Prophet's (ﷺ) ambassador to the Abyssinian court. As stated earlier, Ja'far ibn Abī Ṭālib (رضي الله عنه) himself delivered the letter of introduction to the Negus. The confusion over who delivered the first letter to the king arose because Ibn Kathīr, quoting al-Bayhaqī, conflated together two separate missions. ‘Amr ibn Umayyāh al-Ḍamrī was chosen by the Prophet (ﷺ) to go to Abyssinia and neutralize the mischief that the Makkan emissaries were planning after the Battle of Badr. Two separate incidents have led to this confusion, both in terms of who the Prophet's (ﷺ) emissary was on each occasion, and second, who comprised the Makkan delegation. We have already shown that in the first case, when the Muslims successfully escaped from Makkah and reached

**Exhibit 5** – A letter from the Negus of Abyssinia to the Prophet (ﷺ), after he had already migrated to Madinah.

In the name of Allah, the Mercy-Giving and the Merciful.

To Muhammad, the Messenger of Allah from Negus al-Aṣḥam ibn Abjar.

Peace be upon you, O Prophet of Allah, along with the mercy and blessings of Allah.

There is no god but Him who guided me to Islam. Your letter, O Messenger of Allah, in which you made reference to Jesus, has reached me. And, by the Lord of the heavens and earth, Jesus is no more than what you stated.

We recognize what you have been commissioned to acquaint us with. We have received your cousin and his friends with hospitality. And I do testify that you are the Messenger of Allah, that you speak the truth and are to be believed. I pledge my allegiance to you, your cousin, and his companions, accepting Islam at his hand for Allah, the Lord of the universe.

I have sent to you, O Prophet of Allah, my son Arhā ibn al-Aṣḥam ibn Abjar, for I possess nothing but myself. If you wish me to come to you, I will do so, O Messenger of Allah, for I testify that what you say is the truth. And peace be upon you, O Messenger of Allah.<sup>58</sup>

Abyssinia, ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ and ‘Abdullāh ibn Abī Rabī‘ah were dispatched to the king’s court. This was in the fifth year of the Prophet’s (ﷺ) mission in Makkah. The second occasion was after

the Battle of Badr in the second year of the Hijrah; and here, it was 'Umarah ibn al-Walid who accompanied 'Amr ibn al-'Āṣ to Abyssinia. Most scholars have assumed there was only one delegation the Makkans dispatched to Abyssinia and various scholars have selected the names of the Makkan emissaries, based on the sources they have used, without checking which incident it was referring to.

It is interesting to note that 'Amr ibn Umayyah al-Ḍamrī was dispatched as the Prophet's (ﷺ) ambassador to Abyssinia even before he became a Muslim. Dr. Ḥamīdullāh has devoted an entire chapter to discuss 'Amr's background.<sup>59</sup> He writes that 'Amr was present both in the Battles of Badr and Uhud on the side of the *mushriks* of Makkah, but he did not take part in fighting against the Muslims.<sup>60</sup> While his participation was clearly the result of clan loyalty and tribal custom in Makkah, obliging him to join his tribal allies in battle, taking part in actual fighting could not be forced on any particular individual. We notice a similar situation had arisen with the Prophet's (ﷺ) uncle al-'Abbās, who while present in the Battle of Badr did not take part in any fighting. He was captured and later ransomed. It also needs recalling that al-'Abbās had accompanied the Prophet (ﷺ) to secretly meet the pilgrims from Madinah for the Second Pact of 'Aqabah (for details, see Chapter 2). He was instrumental in facilitating the agreement that led to the Prophet's (ﷺ) migration from Makkah to Madinah even though he had not embraced Islam yet.

'Amr ibn Umayyah al-Ḍamrī's father-in-law, 'Ubaydah ibn al-Ḥārith (رضي الله عنه), one of the earliest Muslims and a cousin of the Prophet (ﷺ), was martyred in the Battle of Badr. It is clear that the Prophet (ﷺ) had close personal relations with 'Amr who, like the Prophet (ﷺ), used to take trade caravans to various places. It also appears, as stated above, that 'Amr had cultivated close relations with the king of Abyssinia both during the latter's time spent among the Ḍamrah tribe when he was sold by his remorseless uncle, and later when he returned to his country to reclaim his throne. 'Amr ibn Umayyah became a Muslim sometime after the Battle of Uhud. The Prophet (ﷺ) sent him on all the missions to Abyssinia

except the first one when Ja‘far ibn Abī Ṭālib (ؓ) himself delivered the introductory letter to the king. This would indicate the great trust the Prophet (ﷺ) had in him even before he had become a Muslim. Four occasions can be identified on which ‘Amr ibn Umayyah acted as the Prophet’s (ﷺ) emissary to Abyssinia,

1. immediately after the Battle of Badr;
2. when letters were sent to various rulers inviting them to Islam after the signing of the Treaty of Ḥudaybiyah;
3. when the Prophet (ﷺ) sent a marriage proposal for Umm Ḥabībah (ؓ) after her husband had died in Abyssinia and asked the Negus to make arrangements for the Muslims’ return to Madinah; and,
4. when the Prophet (ﷺ) sent a letter to the successor of Negus Aṣḥam inviting him to Islam.

It is clear how the confusion among some scholars regarding the contents of the letters arose. These scholars could neither have seen the original letter nor copies of it since none were available. The information transmitted to the scholars regarding the contents of different letters got mixed-up along the way, but if we keep in mind that the Prophetic Seal at the end of the Madinan letters was made after the Treaty of Ḥudaybiyah, then the letter delivered by ‘Amr ibn Umayyah al-Ḍamrī to the Negus was indeed at the same time as the letters sent to other rulers. Ibn Sa‘d also concurs with this observation.<sup>61</sup> The discovery of one of the original letters confirms this, as we shall presently see.

One other point is worthy of note. Once a majority of the Prophet’s (ﷺ) companions had migrated to Abyssinia, the handful remaining in Makkah faced even greater persecution and hardships at the hands of the Quraysh. It is reported that when *Sūrah al-Najm* was recited in the Ḥaram and everyone, including the Makkan *mushriks*, fell down in *sujūd* with the Muslims, this led to speculation that the Quraysh had accepted Islam prompting some Muslim migrants in Abyssinia to return.<sup>62</sup> When they discovered that this was false, most of them went back although some stayed in Makkah or were forcibly held back from leaving.



**Exhibit 6** – One of the letters delivered to the Negus of Abyssinia by ‘Amr ibn Umayyah al-Ḍamrī.

In the name of Allah, the Mercy-Giving, the Merciful.

This is a letter from Muhammad, the Messenger of Allah to the Negus, al-Aṣḥam, the great leader of Abyssinia.

Peace be upon those who follow guidance, commit to Allah and His Messenger, and testify that there is no deity/authority but Allah alone, who has no rival or peer, who took no female partner for Himself, and who begat no child, and they testify that Muhammad is His servant and His Messenger.

I call on you in Allah’s name, for I am His Messenger. So yield [to Him] and be at peace! **“O People of the Book, come to a common agreement between us both; that we will conform to none but Allah and associate no other rival [or peer] with Him [in dominion or rule]; that we will not take one another as masters to the exclusion of Allah. But if you do turn aside, then say, ‘Bear witness that we are Muslims’” [3:64].** But if you refuse, then upon you is the sin of those of your people who are Christians.

There is also a third letter mentioned by historians. This one is reproduced in its entirety in Exhibit 6. The reference to *Sūrah Āl ‘Imrān* clearly indicates that it was sent from Madinah after these *āyāt* had been revealed. Clearly, this was not the letter delivered by Ja’far ibn Abī Ṭālib (ﷺ) when he first arrived in Abyssinia.

### Discovery of the Original Letter in 1936CE

The contents of two letters sent to the Negus have been confirmed, at least in one case, with the discovery of an original letter of the Prophet (ﷺ) addressed to the king of Abyssinia. This came to light in 1936 in Ethiopia. Then Emperor Haile Sellassie showed it to a delegation of Muslims who had called upon him in his palace in Addis Ababa. The story was published in the Addis Ababa newspaper, *Burhan-e Islam*, and later picked up by newspapers in Egypt and elsewhere. Soon thereafter, the Italians attacked and occupied Ethiopia; the emperor fled and sought refuge in London. The letter somehow found its way to Damascus and was obtained in 1938 from a Syrian family by the Scottish orientalist, Douglas Morton Dunlop.<sup>63</sup>

The letter consisting of 17 lines has the same script as was prevalent during the time of the Prophet (ﷺ). Before the discovery of the original letter, Dr. Ḥamīdullāh had suggested that al-Ṭabarī and others had perhaps confused the contents of two separate letters. The discovery of one original letter confirms Dr. Ḥamīdullāh's conclusion. Exhibit 7 shows a translation of the letter that exists today in Istanbul's Topkapi Museum.<sup>64</sup> The Prophetic Seal is at the end of the letter.

From the foregoing, we can conclude that more than one letter was sent to the Negus. While we do not have the original or even a copy of the letter sent by the Prophet (ﷺ) via the hand of Ja'far ibn Abi Ṭālib (رضي الله عنه), the letter in Exhibit 7 does not mention anything relating to his introduction. So it is clearly not the one Ja'far (رضي الله عنه) delivered to the Negus.

More important is the fact that even in Makkah, the Prophet (ﷺ) was operating on the basis that he had authority separate from that of the Quraysh and that he dealt with the rulers of distant lands as the leader of a small but distinct community — the Muslims. This fact is important since it signifies that the Prophet (ﷺ) was thinking in terms of power and authority even when he had little control over the environment in Makkah. It also points to the fact that he was already thinking, so soon after he had started his mission in Makkah, in terms of having some territory under

**Exhibit 7** – Translation of an original letter of the Prophet (ﷺ), sent to the Negus of Abyssinia from Madinah.

In the name of Allah, the Mercy-Giving, the Merciful.

From Muhammad, Messenger of Allah, to the Negus al-Aṣḥam, king of Abyssinia.

May you be secure. I express to you my praises for Allah [the one authority/deity besides whom there is none] the Sovereign, the All-Holy, the Source of Peace, and the Foundation of Faith. I testify that Jesus is *Rūḥ-Allah* and His Word that He cast unto Mary, the good, chaste, unviolated virgin. And so she bore Jesus, whom Allah created from His *rūḥ* and His breath, just as He created Adam by His hand and His breath. I call upon you to commit to the One God who has no associate. To Him all obedience is due.

Follow me, believe in me as well as in that which has come down to me for I am the Messenger of Allah.

Peace be upon those who follow the guiding path!

his control to establish the Islamic State. This has important implications for the power dimension in the *Sīrah* and would help us to appreciate that Muslims must strive to implement the laws of Islam whether they have a territory under their control or not. True, not all principles of Islam can be implemented in the absence of territory (state) but the fact remains that Islam's own identity must be preserved. Similarly, the Prophet (ﷺ) dealt with the Negus, the ruler of another independent state, from a position of authority initiating a tenor of correspondence that had all the attributes of the ruler of a state.

The Prophet's (ﷺ) letters are remarkable for a number of reasons. There were not many people in Makkah at the time who could write, yet the Prophet (ﷺ) insisted that together with Qur'anic revelations, messages sent to various rulers inviting them to Islam be in written form. There is no evidence to suggest that any earlier Prophets (ﷺ) had used this method except Prophet Sulaymān (ﷺ) who had sent a correspondence to Bilqīs, the Queen of Sheba.<sup>65</sup> We must note that Prophet Sulaymān (ﷺ) already possessed power and authority as the ruler of a kingdom so he was dealing with Queen Bilqīs from a position of strength. Other Prophets (ﷺ) had relied on verbal communications to convey their message. The Qur'an narrates the story of Mūsá (ﷺ) and how Allah (ﷻ) commanded him to go to the court of Pharaoh<sup>66</sup> to inform him of Allah's (ﷻ) commands and invite him to Islam (yielding to Allah's (ﷻ) will). This message was delivered verbally. The letter to the Negus was the first written message sent by the Prophet (ﷺ) to any ruler on the basis of his own position as the leader of a small but distinct community independent of the power structure in Makkah. In this sense, his action was similar to that of Prophet Sulaymān (ﷺ) who acted both as the ruler of a kingdom and as a prophet rather than that of Prophet Mūsá (ﷺ) who had no territory under his command. The comparison with Prophet Sulaymān (ﷺ), however, only goes as far as the mode of communication is concerned; unlike Prophet Sulaymān (ﷺ), Allah's final Messenger (ﷺ) had no territory under his command in Makkah at the time.

We can also identify some salient, but significant, features of the Prophet's (ﷺ) letters:

1. like each *sūrah* of the Qur'an, they all start with *bismillāh*;
2. they first identify the sender — *From Muhammad, the Messenger of Allah* (ﷺ) — followed by the name of the addressee. In normal correspondence, the addressee is mentioned first. The Prophet's position as the Messenger of Allah (ﷻ) clearly took precedence over any worldly position or authority an individual may have possessed;
3. they praise Allah (ﷻ), emphasizing His Oneness. This is the fundamental commitment for all Muslims;

4. the purpose of each, essentially an invitation to Islam, is presented briefly but succinctly. There are no unnecessary details; and
5. there is the Prophetic Seal at the end.

The Prophetic Seal was made at the recommendation of Salmān al-Fārsī (رضي الله عنه) who informed the Prophet (ﷺ) that rulers did not pay attention to letters unless they were stamped with the seal of the sender. On the Prophet's (ﷺ) orders, a silver ring, embossed with the inscription *Muhammad Rasūl-Allah*, was fashioned (see Exhibit 2, p. 43).<sup>67</sup> The four original letters that have been discovered each have the identical Prophetic Seal.

Written correspondence is the standard form of communication between officials and states these days. Even when verbal messages are communicated, these are nonetheless put in writing to confirm the original intent and to maintain an archivable record. It is customary today that when the head-of-state or high official of a country makes a statement regarding relations with another country, the recipient country's officials expect a written communique to confirm the precise contents of the message before they issue an official response. This is established practice today. This was not the case at the time of the Prophet (ﷺ); as stated earlier, almost all Prophets (ﷺ) conveyed their messages verbally. The last and final Prophet (ﷺ) initiated the process of written communications to rulers both to convey the message of Islam and to normalize relations with them. Such protocol is part of diplomacy today. The Prophet (ﷺ) clearly visualized his role both as a prophet as well as the leader of a distinct community even though he did not have a territory under his jurisdiction at the time.

Equally significant is his optimism. The Prophet (ﷺ) was sending a group of his companions — men and women oppressed by their own society in Makkah — to another country whose ruler he had never met. For his companions fleeing their own homeland, he expected justice and fair treatment from the Abyssinian king. He addressed him with the confidence exhibited by the ruler of an established state, enjoying power and authority. In fact, the Prophet

(ﷺ) was in the weakest power position he would ever be in. Such confidence can only come from deep conviction in the undisputable virtue of one's cause. Clearly, the Prophet (ﷺ) completely relied on Allah (ﷻ) and had the commitment and determination to see it through regardless of the consequences. At the same time, he had resolute faith in the goodness and high potential of human nature; that is why he always appealed to it in hopes of a positive response. Force was not precluded but it was the choice of last resort.

## Conclusion

We can draw three broad conclusions from the foregoing:

1. The dispatch of his companions to Abyssinia was meant to secure a safe place for them in which to practice their *dīn*. Abyssinia was an appropriate place because its ruler was known to be just and he was from the Ahl al-Kitāb. As a sincere Christian, the Negus immediately recognized the truth of Islam and the prophethood of Muhammad (ﷺ), and accepted both. There was another, equally important reason behind the migration to Abyssinia. It had to do with the internal situation in Makkah where the real battle was shaping up between Islam and the *jāhili* spirit that had held sway for so long.
2. Sending the children of prominent clan leaders away from Makkah was to demonstrate the basis of the new relationship that had been established since the advent of Islam. Family relations or clan loyalties were no longer to be respected as bonding mechanisms between people. The migration to Abyssinia by many prominent youth of the Quraysh marked a turning point in the establishment of a new Islamic paradigm, because it was a stark reminder to the leading figures of Makkah that they could no longer count on family or clan links to get their way. It was a major challenge to the established order in society. This was bound to upset the Makkan chiefs and it did. While their persecution of those who stayed behind intensified, it nevertheless made the Makkan chiefs also feel vulnerable. On several occasions, they visited the

Prophet's (ﷺ) uncle Abū Ṭālib asking him to rein in his nephew. On another occasion, they attempted to strike a deal with the Prophet (ﷺ) directly, again to no avail. This was in addition to the offers they made on their own, such as 'Utbaḥ ibn Rabi'aḥ's attempt in the Ḥaram to entice the Prophet (ﷺ) with offers of wealth and power or, if he had fallen in love with some beautiful woman, to make her available to him.<sup>68</sup> It was clear from such talk that they stubbornly refused to believe the Prophet was the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ). Despite the rejection of Islam's message by the Makkan chiefs, their children were attracted to it and were prepared to abandon their parents, wealth, and comfort for the sake of truth. This was quite a shock to the power elite of Makkah.

3. The migration of Muslims to Abyssinia also had another purpose: to convey the message of Islam and invite its ruler to it. Given his sincerity and just nature, the Negus immediately saw the truth and accepted Islam, although he kept it secret because of likely opposition from his priests and some of his courtiers who feared losing their privileges.

One of the more significant lessons from this effort was that the Prophet (ﷺ) sent written messages to the Negus, signifying his position both as the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) as well as the ruler of a community albeit without a territorial base at the time. Looked at in isolation, the migration to Abyssinia may appear a minor event but in the larger scheme of the Prophet's (ﷺ) mission on earth, it had great significance. It signaled, so soon after the initial revelation, that Islam's message was not only for the Arabians; nor was it to be confined to the people of the Arabian Peninsula. It was for all mankind and the conversion of the Negus to Islam confirmed this with striking clarity.

## Notes and References

- 1 Compare this to today's Muslims who constitute a clear majority in many parts of the world yet still regard themselves to be oppressed. This clearly

reflects the Muslims' weakness and their abandonment of the commands of Allah (ﷻ), and has enabled predatory powers, internal as well as external, to oppress them. In most parts of the Muslim world, tyranny is the general rule because only a minority of Muslims stands up to challenge such conditions. True, states have developed numerous coercive instruments to terrorize people but that has been the case throughout history. Muslims, more specifically the Islamic movement, must find ways to surmount these problems; inaction and passivity are not options.

- 2 Abū Bakr Muḥammad ibn Ishāq ibn Yasār and Abū Muḥammad 'Abd al-Malik ibn Hishām, *Seeratun Nabi, Volume 1, (rendition of Muḥammad ibn Ishāq's original work, Urdu)*. (Lahore, Pakistan: Idara-e Islamiyyat, 1989), pp. 82–84.

- 3 Ibid., pp. 90–92.

- 4 Dr. Muḥammad Ḥamīdullāh (Khalid Pervez, translator), *Le Prophete de l'Islam (Payghambar-e Islam: Urdu translation from French)*. (Multan, Pakistan: Beacon House, 2005), p. 301.

- 5 Ibid., pp. 298–300.

Muḥammad Ḥusayn Haykal (Dr. Ismā'il Rājī al-Fārūqī, translator), *The Life of Muhammad (ﷺ)*. (Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia: Islamic Book Trust, 1993), p. 36.

- 6 Qur'an (105:1–5).

- 7 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Suhaylī, *Rawḍ al-Anf, Volume 1 (Urdu)*. (Lahore, Pakistan: Ziaul Qur'an Publications, 2005), pp. 214–15; also quoted in,

Ḥamīdullāh, *Le Prophete de l'Islam*, p. 299.

- 8 Dr. Muḥammad Ḥamīdullāh, *Rasool-e Akram ki Siyasi Zindagi (Urdu)*. (Karachi, Pakistan: Darul Asha'at, 2003), p. 125.

- 9 Ibn Ishāq and Ibn Hishām, *Seeratun Nabi, Volume 1*, pp. 207–13;

Abū Ja'far ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Tārikh al-Umam wa-al-Mulūk (popularly known as Tareekh-e Tabari), Volume 1 (Urdu)*. (Karachi, Pakistan: Nafees Academy, 1987), p. 95.



10 'Uthmān (رضي الله عنه) was exempted from fighting in the Battle of Badr because the Prophet (ﷺ) had asked him to tend to Ruqayyah (رضي الله عنها) who was seriously ill; she did not survive the illness.

11 These included the Banū Umayyah, Banū 'Abd Manāf, Banū Quṣayy, Banū 'Abd al-Dār, Banū Zuhrah, Banū 'Adī, Banū 'Āmir ibn Lu'ay, Banū Taym, Banū Makhzūm, Banū Jumah, Banū Sahm, Banū Ḥārith ibn Fihri, Banū Hudhayl, Banū Bahrā', and many other clans; see,

Ibn Ishāq and Ibn Hishām, *Seeratun Nabi*, Volume 1, pp. 207–13;

Al-Ṭabarī, *Tareekh-e Tabari*, Volume 1, pp. 95–96.

12 Ibn Ishāq and Ibn Hishām, *Seeratun Nabi*, Volume 1, p. 213.

13 Al-Ṭabarī, *Tareekh-e Tabari*, Volume 1, p. 96.

14 Upon hearing this, the Prophet (ﷺ) is reported to have said, “‘Ammār, a rebellious group will kill you.” This prediction of the Prophet (ﷺ) was confirmed in the Battle of Ṣiffīn in which 'Ammār (رضي الله عنه) was martyred fighting on the side of Imam 'Alī (رضي الله عنه) against Mu'āwiyah's rebellion; see,

Abū al-A'lá Mawdūdī, *Khilafat wa Mulukiyyat*, 21st edition. (Lahore, Pakistan: Idara Tarjuman al-Qur'an, 1990), pp.136–37, (originally found in the Hadith collections of al-Bukhārī, Muslim, al-Nisā'ī, Abū Dāwūd, al-Ṭabarānī, al-Bayhaqī, and others; it is also mentioned by Ibn Sa'd).

15 This saying of Imam 'Alī (رضي الله عنه) has several variations, all of which convey the same general meaning; one of them is presented on p. 36.

16 “Some people of al-Ḥīrah (now al-Kūfah),” according to Dr. Ḥamīdullāh, introduced these skills in Makkah; see,

Dr. Muḥammad Ḥamīdullāh (Muḥammad Raḥimuddin, translator), *An Introduction to the Conservation of Hadith in Light of the Ṣaḥīfah of Ḥammām ibn Munabbih*. (Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia: Islamic Book Trust, 2003), p. 3.

17 Ibid.

During the early days when Arabic was mostly spoken (and not written) in a very long-standing oral tradition, there were 28 letters in the Arabic alpha-

bet but there were no “independent shape(s) for each and every letter.” This means that several letters had the same shape but different sounds, and were distinguished by the context in which the word was used. Obviously, the original Arabs, whose greatest pride was the quality of their spoken language, had no problem with this; but with Islamic expansion into non-Arabic speaking areas, the newly converted Muslims, having little experience with the Arabic language, started reading the Qur’an incorrectly. In order to rectify this problem, a system was developed during ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb’s *khilāfah* in which the letters with different sounds but the same shape were distinguished by one, two, or three dots above or below the consonant.

Also, in Arabic (and other languages upon which Arabic has had a heavy influence, like Farsi and Urdu), the three vowels are not explicitly written with the consonants in the same way that vowels are expressed in Latin and European languages. The vowel pattern for every word is generally understood from the context; the only place where the vowel pattern is explicitly identified is the Qur’an, with the diacritical marks (*fathah*, *ḍammah*, *kasrah*, and *sukūn*) serving as the vowels for each word. The Qur’an is so written for obvious reasons, because most of the Muslims, who are non-Arabic speaking peoples, still have to read the Qur’an with the correct enunciation of the words. See also,

Dr. Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq Anṣārī, *Learning the Language of the Qur’an*. (Delhi, India: Markazi Maktaba Islami, 2003), pp. xv–xvi.

- 18 Putting dots on the letters, called *qarsh*, as well as explicitly identifying the vowels with diacritical marks were introduced later to minimize the possibility of misreading and therefore, misunderstanding the meaning of what was written. See note 15 above, and

Ḥamīdullāh, *An Introduction to the Conservation of Hadith*, p. 4.

- 19 Ibid., pp. 4–5.
- 20 Khursheed Ahmed Farooq, *Ḥaṣrat Umar kay Sarkari Khutoot (Urdu)*. (Delhi, India: Nadwatul Mussanifeen, Delhi, 1959).
- 21 Both al-Balādhurī and Ibn al-Qayyim al-Jawzīyah have named 17 persons who could read and write in Makkah when the Prophet (ﷺ) started his mission. Ibn al-Qayyim’s list does not include the name of Imam ‘Alī (عليه السلام) when it is well established that he was the one who wrote the Treaty of Ḥudaybiyah as dictated to him by the Prophet (ﷺ). See the citations below,

Aḥmad ibn Yaḥyá ibn Jābir al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ al-Buldān*. pp. 471–72; quoted in,

Ḥamīdullāh, *An Introduction to the Conservation of Hadith*, p. 4;

Ibn al-Qayyim al-Jawziyyah (Jalāl Abū al-Ru'b, translator), *Zād al-Ma'ād fī Hady Khayr al-'Ibād*, Volume 1. (Orlando, Florida: Islamic Learning Media Publications, 2003), p. 202;

Ibn Ishāq and Ibn Hishām, *Seeratun Nabi*, Volume 1, p. 215;

Abū 'Abdullāh Muḥammad ibn Sa'd, *Kitāb al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā*, Volumes 1 & 2, 6th edition (Urdu). (Karachi, Pakistan: Nafees Academy, 1987), p. 396.

- 22 Hafiz Muhammad Sa'dullah (translator), *Naqoosh Rasool Number 7* (Urdu). (Lahore, Pakistan: Idara-e Farooq-e Urdu, 1984), p. 3 and pp.134–89.

In this encyclopaedic work, 48 persons are listed as scribes of revelation but these include both the people of Makkah and Madinah. Obviously not every one of these 48 individuals was assigned the task of writing the revelation; some were asked to write letters or treaties as dictated by the noble Messenger of Allah (ﷺ).

- 23 When 'Amr ibn Ḥazm al-Anṣārī (رضي الله عنه) was appointed governor of Yemen he compiled the written instructions given to him by the Prophet (ﷺ) and preserved them. His *muṣḥaf* contained 21 documents but the original is no longer extant; see,

Syed Mahboob Rizvi, *Maktoobaat-e Nabawi*, 2nd Edition. (Lahore, Pakistan: Idara-i Islamiyyat, 1975), p. 40.

- 24 See 'Amr ibn Ḥazm al-Anṣārī's *muṣḥaf* in Ibn Ṭūlūn's book, *A'lām al-Sā'ilīn 'an-Kutub Sayyid al-Mursalīn*, quoted in two books by Ḥamīdullāh,

Dr. Muḥammad Ḥamīdullāh, *Al-Wathā'iq al-Siyāsiyah fī al-'Ahd al-Nabawī wa-al-Khilāfah al-Rāshidah*, 7th edition. (Beirut, Lebanon: Dār an-Nafā'is, 2001), p. 25;

Dr. Muḥammad Ḥamīdullāh, *Documents sur diplomatique Musalamane a l'époque du Prophete et des Khalifes orthodoxes*, Volume 2 (French). (Paris, France: G.P. Maisonneuve, 1935), pp. 95–97, (the book is based on his PhD dissertation).

- 25 Cited by al-Ṭabarī, al-Qaṣṭalānī, Ibn al-Qayyim, Ibn Kathīr, and others; and requoted in,

- Ḥamīdullāh, *Rasool-e Akram ki Siyaasi Zindagi*, p.126.
- 26 Rizvi, *Maktoobaat-e Nabawi*, 2nd Edition, p. 50.
- 27 Abū al-Fidā' 'Imād al-Dīn Ismā'il ibn 'Umar ibn Kathīr, *Al-Bidāyah wa-al-Nihāyah* (Urdu), Volumes 3–4. (Karachi, Pakistan: Nafees Academy, 1987), pp. 136–38.
- 28 Narrated on the authority of al-Ḥākim, Aḥmad 'Abd al-Jabbār, and Ibn Ishāq, and cited in al-Bayhaqī's *al-Dalā'il* in the chapter entitled "On the contents of the document sent by the Prophet (ﷺ) to the Negus." Requoted in, Ibn Kathīr, *Al-Bidāyah wa-al-Nihāyah*, Volumes 3–4, p. 136–37.
- 29 Abū al-Fidā' 'Imād al-Dīn Ismā'il ibn 'Umar ibn Kathīr (Trevor Le Gassick, translator), *Al-Siraḥ al-Nabawīyah*. (Reading, United Kingdom: Garnet Publishing, 2002).
- 30 Ibn Kathīr, *Al-Siraḥ al-Nabawīyah*, Volume 2, pp. 25–26.
- 31 Ibid.
- 32 Abū al-A'lá Mawdūdī, *Tafheem ul-Qur'an*, Volume 1. (Lahore, Pakistan: Maktaba-e Ta'meer-e Insaniyyat, 1974), p. 228.
- 33 Ḥamīdullāh, *Rasool-e Akram ki Siyaasi Zindagi*, p. 127.
- 34 Ibid., pp. 127, 148.
- 35 Ḥamīdullāh, *Le Prophete de l'Islam*, p. 452.
- 36 Ibid.
- 37 Ibn al-Qayyim al-Jawzīyah, *Zād al-Ma'ād*, Volume 1, p. 205.
- 38 Ḥamīdullāh, *Al-Wathā'iq al-Siyāsīyah*, pp. 21–22 (cited from document no. 21); Ḥamīdullāh, *Le Prophete de l'Islam*, pp. 302–03.
- 39 'Urwaḥ ibn al-Zubayr (Muḥammad Sa'id al-Raḥmān 'Alawī, translator), *Maghāzi Rasūl-Allah* (ﷺ), 3rd edition (Urdu). (Lahore, Pakistan: Adara-e Thaqafat-e Islamiyya, 2000), p. 110.

This is the earliest book of *Sīrah* discovered so far; the original manuscript was discovered by Dr. Muṣṭafá al-Aʿẓamī. 'Urwaḥ ibn al-Zubayr died in 93 or 94AH.

- 40 Ibn Kathīr, *Al-Bidāyah wa-al-Nihāyah*, Volumes 3–4, p. 133.
  - 41 Ibn Ishāq and Ibn Hishām, *Seeratun Nabi*, Volume 1, p. 214.
  - 42 Al-Ṭabarī, *Tareekh-e Tabari*, Volume 1, p. 100.
  - 43 Ḥamīdullāh, *Le Prophete de l'Islam*, p. 304.
  - 44 Dr. Ḥamīdullāh provides the following general account that has been rephrased here: 'Umārah was handsome but he also had a flamboyant lifestyle. Thus on the second mission, it is reported that 'Umārah tried to entice 'Amr ibn al-ʿĀṣ's wife, who also accompanied her husband on the trip, but he first had to get rid of 'Amr. He plotted to throw him into the sea anticipating that he would drown. Being a good swimmer, 'Amr saved himself but did not reveal that he was now suspicious of 'Umārah. To exact revenge, 'Amr trapped 'Umārah in a compromising situation with the Negus's wife and then told the king about it. Furious at this affront to his honor, the king did not kill 'Umārah because it would have been against diplomatic protocol, but punished him by casting a magic spell on him. 'Umārah became deranged and fled into the wilderness where he lived until the rule of the second *khalīfah*, 'Umar, who sent one of his relatives to bring him back. He was located but in the struggle to grab and subdue him, 'Umārah became violent and was killed.
- Ḥamīdullāh, *Le Prophete de l'Islam*, pp. 309–10.
- 45 Martin Lings, *Muhammad (ﷺ): His Life Based on the Earliest Sources*. (Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia: Islamic Book Trust, 1983), p. 83.
  - 46 Qur'an, 19:16–21.
  - 47 Lings, *Muhammad (ﷺ)*, p. 83.
  - 48 Ibn Kathīr, *Al-Bidāyah wa-al-Nihāyah*, Volumes 3–4, p. 134;
- Ibn al-Qayyim al-Jawzīyah, *Zād al-Ma'ād*, Volume 1, p. 205.
- 49 Khālīd ibn Sa'īd (رضي الله عنه), one of the companions, acted as her *walī* (guardian, advocate, counsel) in the absence of her father, Abū Sufyān, who was until then a staunch enemy of Islam.

Ḥamīdullāh, *Al-Wathā'iq al-Siyāsīyah*, p. 106 (cited from document no. 24).

- 50 Abū al-Qāsim ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Suhaylī in *Rawḍ al-Anf*, narrates in detail al-Najāshī’s background, saying that his father was murdered through a conspiracy hatched by some courtiers working in tandem with his uncle who had 12 sons while al-Najāshī had no brothers. Al-Najāshī was sold to an Arabian merchant who took him to a place near Badr. His uncle was struck by lightning soon after becoming king whereupon one of his sons was made king, but the son was completely incompetent and brought immense misery to the people of Abyssinia. The courtiers were forced to ask for al-Najāshī’s return who at the time was grazing sheep for his master in the valley of Badr. Al-Najāshī also learned Arabic during his stay in Arabia. Recorded by Imams al-Bukhārī and Muslim, and requoted by

‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Suhaylī, *Rawḍ al-Anf, Volume 1 (Urdu)*. (Lahore, Pakistan: Ziaul Qur’an Publications, 2005), pp. 182–88;

Ibn al-Qayyim al-Jawzīyah, *Zād al-Ma‘ād, Volume 1*, p. 205.

- 51 Ḥamīdullāh, *Rasool-e Akram ki Siyaasi Zindagi*, p. 130.
- 52 Ibn Kathīr, *Al-Sirah al-Nabawīyah, Volume 2*, p. 320–21.
- 53 Ḥamīdullāh, *Al-Wathā'iq al-Siyāsīyah*, p. 104 (cited from document no. 23);  
Ḥamīdullāh, *Rasool-e Akram ki Siyaasi Zindagi*, p. 131–32.
- 54 Ibn Kathīr, *Al-Sirah al-Nabawīyah, Volume 2*, p. 27.
- 55 Ḥamīdullāh, *Le Prophete de l’Islam*, p. 311.
- 56 Recorded in his *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* (Chapter 32, no. 91) and *Sunan al-Tirmidhī* (Chapter 40, no. 23); and requoted in  
Ḥamīdullāh, *Le Prophete de l’Islam*, p. 311; also,  
Ḥamīdullāh, *Rasool-e Akram ki Siyaasi Zindagi*, p. 133.
- 57 Recorded by Imam Aḥmad ibn Hanbal in his *Musnad* (Volume 3, pp. 441–42; Volume 4, pp. 74–75); and requoted in  
Ḥamīdullāh, *Le Prophete de l’Islam*, p. 311.

- 58 Ibn Kathīr, *Al-Siraḥ al-Nabawīyah*, Volume 2, p. 27;  
Ḥamīdullāh, *Rasool-e Akram ki Siyaasi Zindagi*, p. 131–32.
- 57 Ḥamīdullāh, *Le Prophete de l'Islam*, pp. 451–59.
- 58 Ibn Sa'd, *Kitāb al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā*, Volume 4, pp. 182–83; requoted in  
Ḥamīdullāh, *Le Prophete de l'Islam*, p. 452.
- 59 Ibn Sa'd, *Kitāb al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā*, Volume 1, p.276.
- 60 Mawdūdī, *Tafheem ul-Qur'an*, Volume 5, p. 189.
- 61 Dr. Ḥamīdullāh has given a fascinating account of how he learned about the letter and how he obtained a copy of it. He then goes on to discuss its contents in detail and presents convincing arguments to confirm its authenticity, while methodically refuting the doubts raised by orientalists like Dunlop.  
Ḥamīdullāh, *Rasool-e Akram ki Siyaasi Zindagi*, pp. 127–35, 146–51.
- 62 This writer visited Istanbul in 04-2007 and went to the Topkapi Museum to see the original letter of the Prophet (ﷺ) but unfortunately the museum was undergoing renovation and the section containing the sacred relics was closed.
- 63 Qur'an, 27:26–29.
- 64 Qur'an, 20:43.
- 65 Ibn Sa'd, *Kitāb al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā*, Volume 2, p. 29.
- 66 Ibn Ishāq and Ibn Hishām, *Seeratun Nabi*, Volume 1, p. 181–82.







## SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PACTS OF ‘AQABAH

It is well documented that Muslims faced great hardships in Makkah. Those who migrated to Abyssinia escaped this horrible plight but it resulted in intensification of persecution against the Muslims remaining in Makkah. Even the conversion of Ḥamzah (ؓ), the Prophet's (ﷺ) uncle, and ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭab (ؓ), another notable of Makkah, to Islam did not ease the relentless persecution to which the early Muslims were subjected. While the Prophet (ﷺ) was cushioned from direct attacks because of his uncle Abū Ṭālib, most of the other Muslims had little protection. The Quraysh led several delegations to Abū Ṭālib in hopes of convincing him to withdraw his protection, but all such attempts failed as Abū Ṭālib remained steadfast in his commitment to protect the Prophet (ﷺ). Once the Qurayshī chiefs realized that Abū Ṭālib would not withdraw his protection, they decided to impose an economic and social boycott not only on the Muslims but also on the entire Hāshim and Muṭṭalib clans, including their non-Muslim members. The only exception to this boycott was Abū Lahab and his family who as compulsive enemies of the Prophet (ﷺ) sided with the *mushriks*.

For three years — from the 7th to the 10th years of the Prophet's (ﷺ) mission — the first Muslims were besieged in Sha'b Abū Ṭālib, a ravine outside Makkah. Nobody traded with or had any social contact with these “outcasts.” After the siege finally ended as a result of the intervention of some non-Muslim but kind-hearted Makkans, who felt guilty about the harsh treatment meted out to the Muslims, the Prophet (ﷺ) suffered two major misfortunes in quick succession. Both his wife Khadijah (رضي الله عنها) and his uncle Abū Ṭālib passed away, leaving him extremely vulnerable. Could their deaths have been precipitated by the boycott? Abū Ṭālib was an old man and the siege with its harsh conditions must have taken a toll on his health. Khadijah (رضي الله عنها) was also quite advanced in age and must similarly have suffered. Whatever the reason, their loss was deeply painful for the Prophet (ﷺ). His efforts to solicit help from the people of al-Ṭā'if, a town some 40 kilometers southeast of Makkah also ended in great disappointment and hardship. Far from accepting his message or helping him, the tribal elders set the town's hooligans upon the Prophet (ﷺ). He was attacked, injured, humiliated, and driven out of town.

It was in these difficult circumstances that a major breakthrough occurred: the Hajj visit of some Khazrajis from Yathrib. The Prophet (ﷺ) always approached the annual Hajj with full vigor in order to convey the Islamic message to the arriving pilgrims. While the Makkan chiefs, particularly people like Abū Jahl and Abū Lahab, objected to this and tried to dissuade the visitors from listening to the Prophet (ﷺ), it is interesting to note that unlike today's rulers in Arabia, the *mushriks* of old did not physically prevent him from conversing with the pilgrims. The people of Khazraj were aware of what the Jews in Yathrib had said about the advent of a prophet. When they heard what the Prophet (ﷺ) had to say, they recognized him to be the awaited one and immediately accepted Islam.<sup>1</sup> Among the group were also members of Banū al-Najjār, from the family of 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib, the Prophet's (ﷺ) grandfather. This breakthrough among the Khazraj led to the arrival of another group during the following year's Hajj.

Twelve men from Yathrib — ten from the Khazraj and two from the rival Aws tribe — came to Makkah, met the Prophet (ﷺ)

and entered into a pact, later called the First Pact of 'Aqabah. They pledged to adhere to the absolute unity of Allah (ﷻ), neither to steal nor commit adultery, and neither to kill their children nor disobey Allah's (ﷻ) commands. While the pact was not made in writing, given the sensitive nature of the negotiations taking place, it was important in the sense that all those present pledged to adhere to it. Again we notice that after making a firm commitment to the one and only God, Allah (ﷻ), there was much greater emphasis on issues of social justice: to not steal, commit adultery, and kill children, the weakest members of society — a practice that was widespread at the time. The order here cannot be overemphasized because the social guarantor of these new behaviors was immediately understood to be the consummate ideological commitment to Allah's (ﷻ) command and His alone. Some Muslims today have unfortunately relegated the fundamental aspect of justice in Islam to a memory black hole. And because Muslims have no power presence in the arena of institutional justice, they have in their modern "advanced" world those duplicitous power cultures that are contented to blow a lot of steam about human rights while simultaneously excluding Allah (ﷻ) as the centerpiece of any justice framework, with the result that justice on paper translates poorly into human and natural rights in the field. The Prophet's (ﷺ) *Sirah* should awaken us to this important dimension of Islam.

At the request of the visitors from Yathrib, the Prophet (ﷺ) sent Muṣ'ab ibn 'Umayr (رضي الله عنه) to teach them the Qur'an and the principles of Islam. Further, he was to invite other people in Yathrib to the *dīn*. Muṣ'ab (رضي الله عنه) was highly successful in his assigned task; he was able to bring members of both the Khazraj and Aws tribes into the fold of Islam.<sup>2</sup> This information was duly communicated to the Prophet (ﷺ) who was admirably pleased with the results. Muṣ'ab (رضي الله عنه) was one of the emigrants who went to Abyssinia, and thus he was one of those who was absent from the Prophet's (ﷺ) company for some time; also the entire Qur'an had yet to be revealed. Compared to Muṣ'ab, there were other companions who had spent more time with the Prophet (ﷺ) like Abū Bakr, who had endured more hardship like Bilāl, and who knew more of the Qur'an like

Imam ‘Alī (عليه السلام). However, despite these realities, the Prophet (ﷺ) dispatched Muṣ‘ab (رضي الله عنه) to prime the sociopolitical ambiance of Yathrib in preparation for the arrival of the Prophet (ﷺ) who would launch the movement dimension of Islam for the first time in history. Was the Prophet (ﷺ) in the business of awarding sensitive political positions in the form of ideological paybacks to those who spent a lot of time with him? Was he in the business of aggrandizing ex-slaves by having them deliver the message to their previous masters? Was he in the business of consolidating family power by choosing family members to do what “others” could not be trusted to do? Indeed, he not only chose people who were right for the task at hand, who could efficiently get the job done, and who could proficiently accomplish the mission, but also those in whom leadership qualities, necessary for the future management of the state, could be developed and nurtured. Contrast this with how the 44th president of the United States apportioned cabinet positions to those ideological insiders who helped him win the election. His appointment to the White House chief-of-staff position went to an ex-Israeli soldier and intelligence operative whose father was a leading figure in the Irgun terrorist outfit, while key treasury and economic advisory positions went to those who were already knee-deep in the 2007–2009 crisis that rocked financial markets and banks worldwide.<sup>3</sup>

Choosing Muṣ‘ab (رضي الله عنه) was a most insightful and strategic political calculation. First Muṣ‘ab (رضي الله عنه) belonged to Banū ‘Abd al-Dār, one of the more influential and powerful clans of the Quraysh, like Banū Umayyāh. Banū ‘Abd al-Dār were responsible for defending the House (the Ka‘bah) against external attack and ensuring its security; they also carried the banner during war and the Prophet (ﷺ) continued this tradition when he went to Madinah (Yathrib). Indeed, in the first two major engagements at Badr and Uḥud, Muṣ‘ab (رضي الله عنه) carried the Muslims’ banner until he gained his *shahādah* during the battle of Uḥud; after Muṣ‘ab (رضي الله عنه) was martyred, then his brother, Abū al-Rūm ibn ‘Umayr (رضي الله عنه) picked up the banner. Everybody in the Arabian Peninsula knew who was who. Thus choosing someone from Banū ‘Abd al-Dār would have carried more

political weight with the Aws and Khazraj than, say, someone from Banū Taym or Banū 'Adī, from whom both Abū Bakr and 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭab (رضي الله عنه) hailed, respectively. This being the case, it served to fortify Muṣ'ab's (رضي الله عنه) immediate and irreversible impact on the society in Yathrib. The Prophet (ﷺ) would use this tactic once again in the deliberations preceding the Treaty of Ḥudaybiyah as he chose 'Uthmān ibn 'Affān of Banū Umayyah to be his chief negotiator.

Second, by the time he became the Prophet's envoy to Yathrib, Muṣ'ab (رضي الله عنه) had already become immune to the kind of material enticements the indigenous Yahūdī factions were used to offering the Aws and Khazraj in order to maintain the blood feud between them. In Makkah, Muṣ'ab (رضي الله عنه) was known to be a nobleman who carried himself with an air of pride and dignity. He was handsome, eloquent and not easily prone to be ill-mannered; he wore the best clothes, ate the best food, rode the finest animals, and smelled of the finest perfume. However, when he accepted Islam, his life and bearing changed precipitously; he endured his share of physical abuse, imprisonment, and ostracization by the same society that once considered him to be one of their finest. His immersion into the Islamic program was so complete and unconditional, that when he returned from Abyssinia, he had shed the air of material nobility and to some extent his youthful charm, wearing tattered and patched clothes. Upon seeing him in this condition, the Prophet (ﷺ) said,

*All praises are due to Allah. Now the condition of the world and worldly people should change. This is the young man who had no equal in Makkah in the luxurious style in which he was brought up. But the regard for virtue and love for Allah and his Prophet have made him indifferent to all worldly pleasures.<sup>4</sup>*

This transformation was also key to his appointment in Yathrib. Despite his physical appearance, his mind was sharper than ever; he had retained his highly regarded eloquence, replacing his ephemeral nobility with a more substantial scholarly commitment to Allah (ﷻ) and His Messenger (ﷺ). He had become so well-grounded in

the Qur'an and the Sunnah that he could not be challenged in a debate; no *jāhili* argument could stump him; and as would be demonstrated in his forthcoming mission to Yathrib, any sincere seeker of guidance, of truth, and of answers for their predicament would become a Muslim. Further, he could not be deceived, blinded, or bullied by anything this world had to offer in terms of power or punishment, rank or retribution, and provision or penury. He would not be bought and he could not be bribed. He was in a sense ready for greater responsibilities, for the difficult environment of Yathrib, with all of its volatile material and social dynamics, complicated by the presence of sanctimonious adherents of previous scripture. Thus he was the perfect emissary to be entrusted with the task of readying Yathrib for its upcoming transformation into the city of the Prophet (ﷺ): Madinah.

Third, Muṣ'ab's (رضي الله عنه) energy, drive, and zeal to make the Islamic program the only institutional instrument of Allah's (ﷻ) command in the land was unmatched. Before the Prophet's (ﷺ) migration to Yathrib, he spared no effort in communicating the new message to all the people of that city; he talked to the nobles, the influential, the merchants, the poor, the slaves, and the Jews. He painted a picture of what the new life would look like; he recited *āyāt* from the Qur'an to the people of Yathrib at every opportunity he would get. In this way, he had an immutable impact on the power brokers in both tribes, the Aws and the Khazraj, many of whom became Muslims along with significant numbers in their tribes, before the Prophet (ﷺ) arrived. This is not a small feat, especially with the presence of the dissembling Yahūd and the incognito *munāfiqs*. After the Prophet (ﷺ) settled in Madinah, Muṣ'ab (رضي الله عنه) concentrated on building the character and fortifying the commitment of the Muslims who made up the new Islamic social order. Never one to be satisfied with his personal eloquence, he ultimately distinguished himself on the battlefield as a fearless warrior. In fact, when the rumor of the Prophet's (ﷺ) death at the Battle of Uhūd began to circulate, it was he who recited the *āyah* below and renewed his assault on the enemy with greater vigor,

**But Muhammad is only a messenger who was preceded by [other] messengers [who also passed away]; so if he dies or is killed, do you retreat and fall back! And whoever does so shall not in the least do harm to Allah, and Allah will make compensations for those who are thankful (3:144).**

And upon seeing his blood-stained, battle-scarred, handless, and lifeless remains at the time of burying the *shahīds* of Uḥud, the Prophet (ﷺ) with tears in his eyes, recited the following *āyah*,

**Among the securely committed [to Allah] are persons who have [always] been true to what they have pledged before Allah; and among them are those who have [already] redeemed their pledge [by death], and those who as yet await [its fulfillment] without having changed [their resolve] in the least (33:23).**

The Prophet (ﷺ) was no stranger to political facilitation preceding military engagement. He knew exactly what he was doing when he chose Muṣ'ab (رضي الله عنه) to be his envoy to the people of Yathrib, soon to become Madinah. As mentioned earlier, the Prophet (ﷺ) was making foreign policy moves long before he became the leader of a bona fide state. He dealt directly with the chiefs of the Aws and Khazraj. Before that, he sought protection for the early Makkan Muslims directly from the Negus of Abyssinia, not his courtiers, ministers, or secretaries. And afterward, when he was in Madinah, he communicated in the capacity of a head-of-state to other heads-of-state; he sent emissaries to talk directly to tribal chiefs or to carry letters to kings and monarchs.

Another consequential aspect of the Prophet's (ﷺ) leadership, generally lost in the chronology of historical facts and events, is that he did not "import" qualified or experienced people to do the vital work of the state in return for political handouts and behind-the-curtain kickbacks. He carefully groomed precocious followers to discharge critical missions and fulfill essential responsibilities.

Muṣ'ab (ﷺ) is a good example. Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) crafted what might be characterized as a *group-taqwá*, very much unlike the personal *taqwá* of today's Saudi-style managed Islam, which starts and ends with ritual punctiliousness. The whole society was exhibiting a level of consciousness of Allah's (ﷻ) power that could only be achieved when all innate individual abilities were channeled harmoniously into sustaining the Islamic movement. And this meant that ritual observance was redeemed by social activism directed toward the attainment of universal societal justice for all people, Muslim and non-Muslim alike. Such a dynamic consciousness would not be possible today even if 2 billion Muslims had the best individual *taqwá*.

No ordinary Muslim, past or present, ever possessed all the skills and attributes of the Prophet (ﷺ), but at his time every Muslim did not have to. However, all of them together possessed a set of aggregate core competencies necessary to launch the first Islamic movement. This was true then, and it is true now for all those who want to properly serve Allah (ﷻ) according to the example and methodology of His last Messenger (ﷺ). What distinguished the Muhammadi implementation of Islam from all of its previous prophetic endeavors, ranging from Adam to 'Isá (ﷺ), was a movement dimension carried upon a state instrument. Despite all of the confidence-bashing, Islamophobic, and Islamofascist propaganda from within and without the house of Islam, every individual activity of a Muslim — be it intellectual, scientific, spiritual, or vocational — is expected to contribute to the success of a movement leading to the establishment of an Islamic society governed by the command and counsel of Allah (ﷻ). At the time of the Prophet (ﷺ), every Muslim, in addition to his commitment to Allah (ﷻ), had a primary skill in which he excelled and which was valuable to the movement — a skill that was duly noted and exploited by the Islamic leadership of the Prophet (ﷺ). Such a choice of person by the Islamic leadership is in of itself an affirmation of the uniqueness Allah (ﷻ) has placed inside of each and every human being. Every one of the early Muslims around the Prophet (ﷺ) played an important role and was made to feel so. In



contrast to the material or worldly possessiveness that characterizes other social systems, it was this level of ownership, a stock in the movement so to speak, that drove a small group of inconsequential people to a height never before witnessed in history.

All of those people who value the Prophet (ﷺ) as a husband, father, companion, and spiritual guide have yet to appreciate his unsurpassed political acumen. To be sure, many of us will talk about how great he was at everything, but how many of us are ready to emulate his example and engage in the kind of preparation that led to these monumental breakthroughs, requiring the facilitative aid of neither sword nor spear.

### The Second Pact of 'Aqabah

The following year, an even larger group of people came from Yathrib for Hajj. Narrators have mentioned 73 men and two women.<sup>5</sup> When the Prophet (ﷺ) learned of their arrival, he secretly met the chiefs of the tribes and arranged to meet the entire delegation two days after the Hajj pilgrimage. The Prophet (ﷺ) insisted on complete secrecy. The Muslims from Yathrib kept their word and did not inform the *mushrik* members of their respective tribes when they left their tents under the cover of darkness for a rendezvous with the Prophet (ﷺ) on the hill of 'Aqabah. The Prophet's (ﷺ) uncle, al-'Abbās ibn 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib, though not a Muslim yet, had been taken into confidence and was present at this very important meeting.

Informed of Muṣ'ab's (رضي الله عنه) success in Yathrib, the Prophet (ﷺ) decided to press for a much broader affiliation with the Muslims there. This would not be limited merely to the propagation of the message of Islam, as had been the case with Makkah for 12 years, or with the first group of Muslims from Yathrib a year earlier. Now the Prophet (ﷺ) wanted to expand the emerging relationship into a formal alliance whereby "the Muslims would help one another to prevent as well as to repel injury and aggression."<sup>6</sup> This was essentially a military pact — a pledge to fight those who would attack the Muslims.

Aware of the importance of the meeting as well as what was being asked of those pledging allegiance, it was the Prophet's (ﷺ) uncle al-'Abbās who spoke first. He asked whether the people of Yathrib were prepared to take on the enmity of Quraysh since the latter would clearly view the new alliance as a hostile foe ready to challenge Quraysh's preeminent position in the Peninsula.<sup>7</sup> Here we witness yet again the enormous self-confidence of the Prophet (ﷺ) as well as his ability to inspire people to make much greater commitment for the sake of Islam. We need to bear in mind that the Prophet (ﷺ) was virtually isolated in Makkah by now; there were few people willing to offer him protection and most of his companions had been forced to migrate to Abyssinia. Since the death of his uncle Abū Ṭālib, the Qurayshī hostility had intensified since the new head of Banū Hāshim — Abū Lahab, a malicious creature — far from protecting his nephew, was extremely hostile and antagonistic to the Prophet (ﷺ). Despite his vulnerability in Makkah, something not hidden from the Yathribī pilgrims, the Prophet (ﷺ) was asking them to join him in his struggle against the powerful Qurayshī chiefs. Even while the people of Yathrib had no direct conflict with the Quraysh, they said with one voice that they were prepared to take on the Makkan chiefs and asked the Prophet (ﷺ) to state whatever he desired of them.

After reciting some *āyāt* from the noble Qur'an and explaining the message of Islam, the Prophet (ﷺ) said to them, "*I covenant with you on the condition that you will protect me against all, just as you would protect your women and children.*"<sup>8</sup> Al-Barā' ibn Ma'rūr, who had embraced Islam during the First Pact of 'Aqabaḥ, was the first to extend his hand to make *bay'ah*. Aware of tribal loyalties and what these might lead to in the future, Mālik ibn al-Tihān al-Anṣārī (better known as Abū al-Haytham), raised an important point before the others had a chance to make their pledge. He said, "O Prophet of Allah, there are pacts, between us and some Jews, which we are going to renounce. Should your cause succeed in the future among your own tribe, would you return to them and abandon us?"

Abū al-Haytham was speaking with the memory of the Battle of Bu'āth still fresh in his mind — a battle that had eliminated most

of the notables of the two power factions of Yathrib, the Aws and the Khazraj. These two also had alliances with the three Jewish tribes in Yathrib, who were not only the dominant economic power there, but had also been playing one Arabian faction against the other. The fear he expressed sprang from the thought that once successful, the Prophet (ﷺ) would go back to Makkah, leaving the Arabian tribes of Madinah dangerously exposed. (In fact, a similar situation would later arise following the Battle of Hunayn in 8AH when the bulk of the war booty was distributed among the Quraysh who had only days earlier entered the fold of Islam).<sup>9</sup>

Allaying Abū al-Haytham's concerns, the Prophet (ﷺ) assured him and the rest of the assembly that he would not abandon them under any circumstances. He spoke in moving terms, *"Your blood is my blood, and your destruction is my destruction. You are of me and I am of you. I shall fight whomsoever you fight and make peace with whomsoever you will make peace."*<sup>10</sup> Upon hearing such assurances from the Prophet (ﷺ), they were completely satisfied. However, before they could pledge allegiance, one of the Muslims of the Khazraj tribe, 'Abbās al-'Ubādah, stood up to warn the assembly that if they thought of abandoning the Prophet (ﷺ) after losing their wealth or after their leaders were killed in battle, they might as well not pledge allegiance to him now. In unison, they all said they were prepared to make whatever sacrifices were required of them.

Thus was concluded the Second Pact of 'Aqabah whereby the history of Islam took a dramatic turn. This was a defining moment for the few individuals around the Prophet (ﷺ) as well as human history. Pledging allegiance to the noble Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) carries with it enormous responsibility but its significance for those making the pledge was even greater. They were becoming a catalytic part of prophetic history and instruments that would shoulder the divine mission. What greater reward could a Muslim ask for?

The years of oppression and persecution were about to end; Madinah beckoned with a new beginning, one that would be more optimistic and auspicious than the previous 12 years. After the conclusion of the Second Pact, the Prophet (ﷺ) showed them one of the key aspects of effective leadership: accountability. He had them

elect twelve *nuqabā'* (representatives) who would be directly responsible to him for their conduct and behavior.

What is interesting about the Second Pact of 'Aqabaḥ is that while it was not put in writing, it signaled a dramatic shift in the power equation of the Muslims; they were no longer isolated. In Madinah, the Prophet (ﷺ) would acquire a secure base from which to operate and he started to think in terms of relocating there once Allah (ﷻ) granted him permission. The two previous attempts — the migration of Muslims to Abyssinia, and his own efforts at seeking support in al-Ṭā'if — did not hold much promise. Abyssinia was across the Red Sea, and Makkah, where the Ka'bah was located, could not be abandoned to the Makkan *mushriks*. Al-Ṭā'if was too close to Makkah from a strategic point of view and a fledgling Islamic community would not be able to withstand the onslaught of the Quraysh. Madinah was ideal: it was sufficiently far away from Makkah, providing some breathing room from the mounting animosity of the Qurayshī clans and it was situated along the trade route to Syria. Furthermore, Makkan caravans passing between Madinah and the coast would become vulnerable to Muslim blockade or attacks. Before the Prophet (ﷺ) could think in terms of dealing with his Makkan foes, he had to relocate to Madinah and consolidate his power base there first.

At the conclusion of the Second Pact of 'Aqabaḥ, the Prophet (ﷺ) advised his companions to start migrating to Madinah but cautioned them to do so in small numbers in order to avoid attracting attention. Despite every precaution, some Muslims were still caught, imprisoned and mercilessly tortured by their Makkan adversaries; others were too poor to leave. When Allah (ﷻ) granted him permission to migrate, the Prophet (ﷺ) asked his close companion Abū Bakr (رضي الله عنه) to accompany him on the arduous journey. Even so, he could not leave in broad daylight; he had to escape Makkah in the quiet of night, leaving his cousin 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib (رضي الله عنه) to sleep in his place so as not to arouse the suspicion of the Makkans' who planned to kill him on the very night of his departure. The Prophet (ﷺ) also instructed 'Alī (رضي الله عنه) to return the *amānahs* the Makkans had placed with him. It is interesting to

note that while the Makkans were his staunch enemies, they still deposited their valuables with the Prophet (ﷺ) for safekeeping; he was known as al-Amin, the trustworthy one. Even though they rejected his message, they had complete faith in his integrity and honesty. The Makkans failed to see the contradiction in their own attitude. The noble Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) gladly took care of their possessions despite their enmity. He was so meticulous in honoring his oaths that even though his life was in imminent danger, he still wanted to ensure that the items left in his trust be returned to their rightful owners even if he was being forced to leave Makkah.

More serious than the physical difficulty of traversing the desert between Makkah and Madinah was the Quraysh's interclan plot to kill the Prophet (ﷺ) while he was still in Makkah. Slipping under the cover of darkness and to avoid detection, the Prophet (ﷺ) and his companion hid for several days in the Cave of Thawr on the southern outskirts of Makkah. The Makkans came close to locating them in the cave but with Allah's (ﷻ) help, they were saved,

**If you do not support the Apostle, then [know that Allah will do so — just as] Allah supported him at the time when those who were bent on denying the truth expelled him [from Makkah], [and he was but] one of two, and when these two were [concealed] in the cave, [and] he [the Apostle] said to his companion, “Grieve not, verily, Allah is with us.” And thereupon Allah bestowed upon him from on high composure from Himself, and He rendered the [public] statements of the *kāfirs* baseless. Whereas the Word of Allah remained ascendant; for Allah is Almighty, Wise (9:40).**

Abū Bakr's son 'Abdullāh (رضي الله عنه) would bring daily news about what the Quraysh were saying and plotting while his daughter Asmā' (رضي الله عنها) brought them food. Once they felt confident that the Makkans were no longer on their trail, they set out for Madinah. Their travails, however, were not over yet. Between the safety of

Madinah and Makkah lay 300 miles of harsh desert and the ever-present threat of the Quraysh tracking them down.

That is precisely what happened when Surāqah ibn Mālik ibn Ju'shum, an expert in tracking and identifying people's footprints in the desert, caught up with them. As it approached the Prophet (ﷺ), Surāqah's horse stumbled. After this happened three consecutive times, allowing him to get no closer to the Prophet (ﷺ), Surāqah abandoned the pursuit because he realized that a higher authority was protecting the Prophet (ﷺ) whose companions now included Abū Bakr as well as the latter's servant 'Āmir ibn Fuhayrah. Surāqah, however, did not want to return empty-handed; he requested the Prophet (ﷺ) to write him a note confirming their present encounter. The Prophet (ﷺ) asked Abū Bakr (رضي الله عنه) to do so.<sup>11</sup>

The point to note in this episode is that even while he was fleeing Makkah under the threat of death, the Prophet (ﷺ) carried ink, pen, and something to write on, paper not being known in Arabia at the time. Provisions for the desert would have been a more natural choice but the Prophet (ﷺ) took care to have ink and writing material available even on such a hazardous journey. Also worthy of note is the fact that Abū Bakr (رضي الله عنه) was among the few people who could read and write. Before Surāqah got his note, the Prophet (ﷺ) told him that he would, one day, wear the golden bracelets of Kisrá (Chosroe), the emperor of Persia. This prediction was fulfilled when the Muslims liberated Persia during the *khilāfah* of 'Umar (رضي الله عنه), who recalling the Prophet's promise, placed Kisrá's bracelets on Surāqah's (رضي الله عنه) wrists. After this desert encounter, Surāqah returned to Makkah, while the Prophet (ﷺ) and his companions headed for Madinah where the anxious Muslims were about to shake hands with their historical destiny. More important was the new beginning of the Islamic era, one that would lead to the establishment of the first Islamic State in history and to a robust expansion that could not be contained in the Arabian Peninsula.

The more they moved away from Makkah, the more they distanced themselves from the travails of the previous 13 years and the closer they got to establishing a just and fair society in which for the first time, the Muslims would not be a persecuted minority. The

Hijrah from Makkah to Madinah, as the migration is known, was also truly a migration from *jāhiliyah* (ignocracy) to a life of purity and sanctity, organized under the soothing canopy of Allah's (ﷻ) divine commands. Madinah, however, was not entirely trouble-free for Muslims, as we shall see in later chapters, but it represented a clean break from the oppression of the past 13 years. It also provided an opportunity to establish, on a sound footing, the power base of Islam centered round al-Masjid al-Nabawī as its seat of authority. The two pacts of 'Aqabah facilitated the transition between the *jāhili* society of Makkah and the soon-to-be-established Islamic State in Madinah.

## Notes and References

- 1 Shibli Naumani and Syed Sulaiman Nadwi, *Seeratun Nabi, Volumes 1–2*. (Lahore, Pakistan: Al-Faisal Nashiran wa Tajiran, 2005), pp. 177–80.
- 2 Abū Bakr Muḥammad ibn Ishāq ibn Yasār and Abū Muḥammad 'Abd al-Malik ibn Hishām, *Seeratun Nabi, Volume 1, (rendition of Muḥammad ibn Ishāq's original work, Urdu)*. (Lahore, Pakistan: Idara-e Islamiyyat, 1989), pp. 289–91;

Abū Ja'far ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Tārikh al-Umam wa-al-Mulūk (popularly known as Tareekh-e Tabari), Volume 1 (Urdu)*. (Karachi, Pakistan: Nafees Academy, 1987), pp. 116–18;

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Muḥammad Ḥusayn Haykal (Dr. Ismā'il Rājī al-Fārūqī, translator), *The Life of Muhammad (ﷺ)*. (Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia: Islamic Book Trust, 1993), pp. 154–55.

- 3 Refers to US President Barack Obama, his first White House chief of staff, Rahm Israel Emmanuel, Treasury Secretary Timothy Geithner (ex-president of the New York Federal Reserve Bank), and Lawrence Summers, who himself pushed through deregulation of the financial markets when he was the treasury secretary in the Bill Clinton administration, leading ultimately to the financial insolvency of 2007–2009.

- 4 Originally quoted by Ibn Sa'd in his *Kitāb al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā* (Volume 3, pp. 116–17), and then requested in,

Dr. Nisar Ahmed, *Naqoosh Rasool Number 5 (Urdu)*. (Lahore, Pakistan: Idara-e Farooq-e Urdu, 1983), p. 262;

‘Abd al-Rahmān al-Suhaylī, *Rawḍ al-Anf, Volume 1 (Urdu)*. (Lahore, Pakistan: Ziaul Qur’an Publications, 2005), p. 366.

- 5 Ibn Ishāq and Ibn Hishām, *Seeratun Nabi, Volume 1*, p. 293;

Haykal, *The Life of Muhammad* (ﷺ), p. 156.

- 6 Ibid.

- 7 Ibn Ishāq and Ibn Hishām, *Seeratun Nabi, Volume 1*, p. 294.

- 8 Ibid.;

Haykal, *The Life of Muhammad* (ﷺ), p. 157.

- 9 After the Battle of Ḥunayn, the Anṣār (the Helpers of Madinah, composed of the Aws and Khazraj), who had stood by the Prophet (ﷺ) for eight years, were given little or nothing of the spoils of war. A dubiousness quickly spread among them inferring that when it was time to make sacrifices, the Prophet (ﷺ) called on them to do so, but when it came to distributing the spoils of war — on this particular occasion it being quite substantial — the Prophet (ﷺ) favored his own kith and kin from Makkah. This is how it appeared to them; the Prophet (ﷺ), of course, saw things differently. He wanted to win over the newly converted people of Makkah, and thus he gave them the bulk of the booty. Witness once again how the Prophet (ﷺ) tactfully put the world, the next world, commitment, and conscience into perspective (Prophet’s (ﷺ) words in italics),

Sa’d ibn ‘Ubādaḥ said, “O Messenger of Allah, this group of the Anṣār are furious at you about the distribution of the booty that you had won. You have allotted shares to your own kinsmen and forwarded lots of gifts to the Arabian tribes. But this group has obtained nothing.”

The Prophet (ﷺ) asked Sa’d, “Sa’d, *what do you think of all that?*” Sa’d replied, “O Messenger of Allah. You know that I am but a member of this group.”



"Call out on your people, and bring them forth to me in this shed," said the Prophet (ﷺ). As soon as the Messenger (ﷺ) faced them, he thanked Allah and praised Him, then said to them inquiring, "I have been told that you are angry with me. Didn't I come to you when you were misguided and Allah guided you [through me]? When you were poor and Allah gave you wealth [through me]? When you were foes and Allah made you love one another [through me]?"

"Yes, Allah and His Messenger are better and more gracious," they said. Then he said, "What prevents you from replying to the Messenger of Allah, O people of Anṣār?" They said, "What should be the reply, O Messenger of Allah, while to the Lord and to His Messenger belong all benevolence and grace."

The Prophet (ﷺ) again said, "But by Allah, you might have answered and answered truly, for I would have testified to its truth myself, 'You came to us belied and rejected, and we accepted you; helpless, and we helped you; a fugitive, and we took you in; poor and we comforted you.' You Anṣār, do you feel anxious for the things of this world, wherewith I have sought to incline these people unto the dīn in which you are already established?"

"Are you not satisfied, O group of Anṣār, that the people go with sheep and camels while you go along with the Messenger of Allah to your [own] dwellings?"

"By Him in whose hand is my life, had there been no migration, I would have been one of the Anṣār. If the people would go through a valley and passage, and the Anṣār go through another valley and passage, I would go through the valley and passage of the Anṣār. "Allah, have mercy on the Anṣār, their children, and their children's children."

The Anṣār wept until tears rolled down their beards as they said, "Yes, we are satisfied, O Prophet of Allah, with our lot and share."<sup>a</sup>

As the Anṣār heard this, they were deeply moved and felt embarrassed at what they had thought. With the assurance that the Prophet (ﷺ) would go with them back to Madinah, they found the deal to be entirely satisfactory.

a Ibn Ishāq and Ibn Hishām, *Seeratun Nabi*, Volume 2, pp. 312–13.

10 Ibn Ishāq and Ibn Hishām, *Seeratun Nabi*, Volume 1, pp. 294–95;

Haykal, *The Life of Muhammad* (ﷺ), p. 158.

11 Ibid., p. 168.





## THE COVENANT OF MADINAH

### ESTABLISHING THE LEGAL AND POLITICAL BOUNDARIES OF THE ISLAMIC STATE

And say [O Prophet], “O my Sustainer! Cause me to enter [upon whatever I may do] in a manner true and sincere, and cause me to leave [it] in a manner true and sincere, and grant me, out of Your grace, sustaining strength!” And say, “The truth has now come [to light], and falsehood has withered away; for, behold, all falsehood is bound to wither away [when the truth is evident]!” (17:80–81).

These *āyāt*, revealed just prior to the Hijrah, are in the form of a *du‘ā* (supplication), referring to the temporal side of the Prophet’s (ﷺ) mission. They predict his triumph, with Allah’s (ﷻ) help, first by his safe entry into Madinah to establish the first Islamic State in history and then ultimately by his liberation of Makkah, whose *mushrik* class had tormented him for 13 years forcing him to abandon the city of his birth. These *āyāt* were revealed at a time when his situation appeared particularly bleak. He had few supporters in Makkah; most of his companions had either migrated to Madinah after the Second Pact of ‘Aqabah or earlier to Abyssinia. And two of his intimate patrons — his uncle Abū Ṭālib and his beloved wife,

Khadijah (ﷺ) — had died three years earlier. Even as life became intolerably difficult for the Prophet (ﷺ), Allah (ﷻ) continued to cradle him with experiences and *āyāt*, portending momentous and unprecedented events in a future as bright and beckoning as the past was bleak and foreboding. Two of Allah's (ﷻ) *āyāt* during this time were the *Isrā'* and the *Mi'rāj*. In the first, the humble Prophet's (ﷺ) preeminent position as the foremost among the illustrious continuum of Prophets (ﷺ) was formally designated when he led them all in a *ṣalāh* at Jerusalem. And then, in the second, his position as the closest of all creation to Allah (ﷻ) was confirmed when he ascended past the seven heavens traversing onto *sidrah al-muntahā*.

The Prophet (ﷺ) already possessed spiritual and sentimental power, in addition to the power that accrues to those who have an impeccable character coupled with an unshakeable resolve, because he was the Messenger of Allah (ﷻ) and the bearer of Allah's (ﷻ) last and final message. The *āyāt* quoted above refer specifically to the issue of temporal power; the defeat of the *kāfirs* is also spelled out in unmistakable terms. Allah (ﷻ) instructs him to seek His help through the *du'ā'*, “...and grant me, out of Your grace, sustaining strength!”<sup>1</sup> Given the context in which these *āyāt* were revealed — at the very moment when he was literally being driven out of Makkah — they reflect an optimism that the *kāfirs* and those of lesser power, who are vicariously disposed to hold the *kāfirs'* views, would find difficult to understand or accept: that the Prophet (ﷺ) would not only return to Makkah, but do so triumphantly. But the divine scheme operates on a much higher plane than most humans can comprehend through their limited understanding.

A well-known hadith of the Prophet (ﷺ) reported by Anas ibn Mālik that is also a *du'ā'*, says,

*O Allah, I seek refuge in You from worries and distress, from weakness and laziness, from cowardice and stinginess, and from the burden of debt and the domination of other men.*<sup>2</sup>

Again, we see that the Prophet (ﷺ) is seeking Allah's (ﷻ) help for very worldly matters — from weakness, cowardice, stinginess, the

burden of debt and from the domination of other men. Weakness does not merely suggest physical vulnerability although that is included; it refers to the kind of communal fragility that would enable others with selfish motives and vested interests to dominate. Domination by unprincipled men would also negate our conscious yielding to Allah (ﷻ), the only Power and Authority worthy of our conformity, this being the very essence of *imān* in Islam. In another hadith, the Prophet (ﷺ) is reported to have said, “Allah deals with those matters through the power of the state that He does not address [directly] in the Qur’an.”<sup>3</sup> Thus, the state as an institution is an integral part of the divine scheme or, as Dr. Kalim Siddiqui puts it even more emphatically, “Islam is incomplete without the Islamic State.”<sup>4</sup>

As the Prophet (ﷺ) embarked on his journey to Madinah, where the Muslims had prepared a rousing welcome for him, there was much more on his mind regarding the future of Islam and Muslims than the trek through 300 miles of inhospitable desert. Madinah was about to become the base of the first Islamic State, the temporal seat of his authority — a blessing and a legacy the people of Makkah and al-Ṭā’if had rejected to their great loss. Allah (ﷻ) Himself was guiding His beloved Messenger (ﷺ) to pray for his entry into Madinah with truth, honor, and dignity. With him was the integrated message of truth — Islam — and in him, Allah (ﷻ) had placed the immense honor of the seal of prophethood, and through him rested the deliverance of all mankind (7:158, 34:28) from institutional subservience to any other temporal human authority — a mission no earlier prophet had been charged with. Thus, the *du‘ā’* was clearly directing the Prophet (ﷺ) toward the realization of his mission beyond the simple transmission of the message: it was to institutionalize this message in society.

Let us consider the steps taken by the Prophet (ﷺ) within the first few days or weeks of his arrival in Madinah and how they fit into the establishment and consolidation of the Islamic State. These included but were not limited to,

1. the institutionalization of *ṣalāḥ al-jumu‘ah*;
2. the establishment of a bond of brotherhood between the Muhājirūn (immigrants) from Makkah and the Anṣār (helpers) of Madinah;

3. the construction of al-Masjid al-Nabawī; and
4. the Covenant of Madinah.

All of these at some level have to do with matters of state. Al-Masjid al-Nabawī was a place not only for gathering the early Muslims for *ṣalāh*, but also a venue for consolidating the human will around a divine program of social justice and the seat of government. All matters relating to the affairs of Muslims were considered and deliberated upon there. *Ṣalāh al-jumu'ah* fulfilled a similar function: an occasion for teaching as well as fortifying Muslim brotherhood, in addition to its primary function: the *taqwā* of Allah (ﷻ). The gathering on Jumu'ah (Friday) is supposed to be a weekly reminder of how Muslims should be continually protecting themselves against the consequences of Allah's (ﷻ) corrective justice. This is a broad and all-inclusive subject, covering all interactions of man in his local, regional, global, and *ghaybī* environments. And this underscores another important function that *ṣalāh al-jumu'ah* fulfilled: the *minbar* became a platform symbolizing the power of Islam. From the *minbar* the head of the Islamic State interacted with people once a week delivering advice as well addressing issues relating to matters of state. And finally, the Covenant of Madinah as a state constitution defined the rights, the responsibilities, and the relationship between the state and its constituents.

For the first few days, the Prophet (ﷺ) stayed in Qubā', just outside Madinah, as the guest of 'Amr ibn 'Awf (رضي الله عنه).<sup>5</sup> There he laid the foundation stone of a *masjid*, now called Masjid Qubā', the first of its kind in Madinah. The Prophet (ﷺ) left Qubā' for Madinah on Jumu'ah. When he reached the neighborhood of Banū Sālim it was time for the afternoon *ṣalāh*. There he performed the first *ṣalāh al-jumu'ah*, delivering and thereby establishing the necessity of a *khutbah* (sermon) during this weekly congregation.<sup>6</sup> While the five daily *ṣalāhs* were formally established in Makkah following the Mi'rāj, *ṣalāh al-jumu'ah* was instituted for the first time in Madinah. This congregational *ṣalāh* for the entire community differs from other *ṣalāhs* in two significant ways: it cannot be offered alone or at home. Aptly thus, Muslims from the entire community must attend

and intently listen to a *khuṭbah* (sermon) that reflects the establishment of Islam's formal authority in the land. Some Muslims have interpreted this to mean that *ṣalāh al-jumu'ah* can only be instituted when power is in the hands of a legitimate Islamic authority. This carries important implications for governance and authority in a Muslim society.

Soon thereafter, the Prophet (ﷺ) addressed another issue that had the potential of being exploited by the enemies of Islam: the establishment of a bond of brotherhood between the Muhājirūn and the Anṣār. The hospitality of the Anṣār may soon have dissipated unless some formal arrangements were made to accommodate the newcomers who were completely destitute. This had to be bolstered by the authority of the Prophet (ﷺ) himself. He assembled the Muslims at the house of Anas ibn Mālik (رضي الله عنه) and paired each *muhājir* with an *anṣārī*.<sup>7</sup> This linkage had an immediate impact on social relations, preventing discord from erupting in the society at large. If it had been left unresolved there would have been great potential for communal disruption since not everyone in Madinah had accepted Islam and since the influx of a large number of immigrants could have been exploited by the *mushriks* in Madinah as well as the Muslims' foes in Makkah. But the bond of brotherhood emphasized another, more important principle in Islam: it changed relations from the *jāhili* practice of blood or tribal ties to ones that were based on a solid commitment to Allah (ﷻ) and His Messenger (ﷺ). It also dealt a blow to the racism widespread in Arabia at the time, a pre-Islamic situation not unlike the world today.

While Islam recognizes differences in family background, tribe, and skin color, it rejects these as the rationale for determining a person's status in life. Allah's (ﷻ) words are very clear: only a person's *taqwā* (consciousness of Allah (ﷻ) and His laws) determines his social standing with respect to other human beings (49:13). This is part of the reason a weekly reminder on the meaning of *taqwā*, using illustrations from real life, is issued every Jumu'ah. This principle was again clearly evident during the Battle of Badr when Muslims confronted their *mushrik* brothers, sons, and fathers. The generosity of the Anṣār toward their *muhājir* guests

from Makkah was exemplary, inspired by the grace and noble character of the Prophet (ﷺ). So pleased was Allah (ﷻ) with this arrangement that he declared it a great virtue in a revelation that came soon thereafter (8:74).

The act of co-joining the Muhājirūn with the Anṣār was the precursor of the *ittiḥād* (unity) that provided the foundation for the group designated by Allah (ﷻ) as *al-ladhīna āmanū*.<sup>8</sup> Without *ittiḥād*, there can be no *al-ladhīna āmanū* and without *al-ladhīna āmanū*, there can be no Islamic state. *Al-ladhīna āmanū* is the constituency that is led by the Islamic executive authority and that implements its commands; at the same time, one of *al-ladhīna āmanū*'s major responsibilities is to hold the Islamic leadership accountable by framing its exercise of power within the guidelines of *al-ḥaqq*. Together *al-ladhīna āmanū* and the Islamic leadership constitute the Ummah; and hence the Ummah is only a bona fide entity so long as this relationship remains symbiotic. In order to discharge this important responsibility, *al-ladhīna āmanū* is required to possess a unique set of characteristics. These characteristics are not purely spiritual, nor completely political, social, or military, but they are a harmonious blend of integrated behaviors that are designed by the Creator Himself so that man can discharge his important social, personal, family, and *ghaybī* obligations with maximum effectiveness. To develop such a system is beyond the collective and aggregate capacities of man; it is too complex a problem for him to solve on his own. To this end, during the course of his lifetime, he is expected to "tame" his self-sufficient arrogance, acknowledge the fact that he needs help, and then yield to Allah's (ﷻ) wisdom, knowledge, command, and power. The Islamic State models this attitude in institutional form.

*Ittiḥād* (unity) describes inherently new characteristics of an emerging group that are distinctive from the original characteristics of the groups coming together. In particular, legitimate Islamic unity describes that distinctive set of integrated activities and attributes endorsed by Allah (ﷻ) and which target the establishment, the implementation, the maintenance, and the adjudication of social justice. To this end, contrast Ja'far's (ﷺ)



description of the life lived by the Arabians before the advent of Muhammad (ﷺ) and after (refer to page 11 of this book). *Al-lad-hīna āmanū* emerged with a new set of essential qualities, ones that equipped them to handle the weighty task of discharging properly their responsibility to Allah (ﷻ) and thereby humanity. And indeed the cause of Allah (ﷻ) on earth is to represent those who have been oppressed and degraded by the corrupt exercise of power and weave threads of justice into the social tapestry of natural human relationships. In this vein, on personal, interpersonal, and social levels, they were required to make *ṣalāh* five times a day, to fast in Ramaḍān, to not become intoxicated, to not commit adultery, to not steal or murder, to thwart institutional greed by giving up gambling and *ribā* transactions, to form institutional mechanisms of wealth distribution and poverty mitigation, to follow conventions on the rules of war and diplomacy, to observe the environmental trust, to honor their constitutional oaths, to liberate man from institutional slavery, and to consolidate these behavioral modifications into the new social, political, spiritual, and ideological culture of the Arabian Peninsula. This is the meaning of *ittiḥād* and its application to state functions. All of these activities of the Ummah cannot be regulated or accomplished without the existence of a state instrument.

Juxtapose this with the symbolic unities that exist in our modern world. To be sure, even though words like “united” and “union” are used, nothing could be farther from the truth. Take the European Union (EU) and the United Nations (UN) for instance. The former was created to compete against the economic power of the United States (and in reaction to the common economic power of the EU, NAFTA was created by the US, Canada, and Mexico). If the economic dominance of the US were to fail, as we are now seeing its economic superstructure being crushed under the weight of its own greed and corruption, there would be no reason for the EU to maintain togetherness. In fact Germany, the UK, and France — being the most virile economic engines of the EU — would immediately bolt because “having to pull along the weaker economies” would be too much of a drag on the same men-

tality of greed that wants to wholly and individually fill the vacuum created by US economic collapse.

After WWII, the humanitarian instrument that apparently transformed the predatory League of Nations into the United Nations was the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. After such a declaration, nearly 100 million people have been killed because of wars of aggression, largely fostered, coached, financed, and supplied by the colonial powers who formed the original League. Scores of indigenous representative movements have been quashed and an equal number of countries have been indiscriminately bombed, leading to millions of casualties, frustration, anger, and violence. There is more dispossession, starvation, famine, disease, movement of refugees, and lack of essential services than there has ever been at any other point in the history of humanity, and this is despite the presence of novel new technologies to make life easier. To be fair, the UN has done many good things, but its “maximum effectiveness,” to apply the term we used earlier, is compromised by the fact that every nation comes to the UN to exploit and pursue its national self-interest, not the common interest of humanity.

There are even arrogant powers, led by the example of the United States, who feel that their own narrow national interest is synonymous with the greater social interest of the rest of humanity. It is these arrogant self-possessed power cultures that run around heaping piles of filth all over the earth, putting the UN in a position to follow behind them and pick up their mess. Even though most of the world’s people are God-fearing folks to some extent or another, their national representatives at the UN are not allowed by the UN charter to convene an international conference on religion! Whose interest does this serve and who is making the ideological rules that the world’s people are forced to follow? Therefore, these are not “unities” in any sense of the word, mainly because the essentially vulturous nature of the power members has not been significantly curtailed or remodeled into the service of loftier objectives. And because of this kind of artificial unity, which is not founded upon the *taqwá* of Allah (ﷻ), how can there be a group possessing the necessary ingredients to justly manage the affairs of

man on this earth? This only goes to show that faux unities and their willing foot soldiers are the stuff that international crime organizations posing as legitimate governments are made of.

Social justice, responsibility, and activism built upon an *ittiḥād* for the purpose and sake of Allah (ﷻ) validates individual and collective acts of devotion. The most important of these is *ṣalāḥ*: it is one of the pillars of Islam and its institutional formalization is a divine command, preferably in a *masjid*, to enable people to connect with Allah (ﷻ) in congregation. The word *ṣalāḥ* itself is derived from the Arabic root, *ṣilah*, which means *connection*. Thus, in performing our *ṣalāḥ*, we are linking with Allah (ﷻ), our Creator and Sustainer, and thereby we might acquire the courage, fortitude, guidance, knowledge, and wisdom to change a bad situation into an acceptable and secure one. The function of a *masjid*, however, is not merely to be a place of ritual worship; it also serves as the seat of government in Islam. When the Prophet (ﷺ) arrived in Madinah, he established the Islamic State. Al-Masjid al-Nabawī, constructed soon thereafter, became the seat of government and reflected the power of the Islamic State where the Prophet (ﷺ) received delegations from different parts of Arabia as well as dialogued with people of other faiths, especially rabbis and leaders of the Jewish people.

Obviously falling short of this particular example of the Prophet (ﷺ), one of the most under-utilized mechanisms available to the Islamic movement is the *masjid*. Even the smallest village in the Muslim world always has a *masjid*, not to mention larger social groupings in cities and towns. This is a delivery mechanism that exists, an infrastructure that Allah (ﷻ) has provided, and the use of which His Prophet (ﷺ) has exemplified; however at the same time, it is not one that is used to full effect. Why? Because the desire to carry the Islamic *da'wah* upon a state instrument is almost nonexistent in the Muslim East. And for this reason, individual *masjids* have fallen prey to sectarian divisions, especially in larger population centers. These *masjids* are not bound together upon a singular directional course because a vital function of state to fulfill society's need for setting direction is not being discharged.

An important leadership activity is creating a vision and choosing a direction. The *masjid* as a venue and the *ṣalāh* as an activity are not being effectively utilized to integrate Muslims into the Islamic leadership culture and the broader Islamic movement. While the *masjid* and the *ṣalāh* therein are only being used for spiritual obligations and while this validates the secular function of “places of worship” within the conventional world power culture, Allah (ﷻ) demands much more than that. Another important leadership activity is to provide social structures where informal human relationships can be nurtured and solidified. The *masjid* is a prolific spot for this to happen on a continuous basis. Muslims gather in their *masjids* five times a day and this frequency of attendance can be used to reinforce the directional course with projects, pursuits, and pastimes that drive motivated Muslims into the mainstream Islamic movement. Further, as a formal place of public assembly, more Muslims could be driven to the *masjid* if the Jumu’ah were to be used to deliver pacesetting, “can’t-miss-this” ideas at least once a week. In other words, if Muslims could be shown that going to the *masjid* is as valuable as, for example, listening to the news, then the dissemination of vital direction-setting information would just be a matter of fact, *wa-law kariha al-mushrikūn*. Or said another way, the *masjid* is the open door of the recruitment center for the soldiers of the Islamic movement who are guided by the leadership cadre known as *al-ladhīna āmanū*.

In addition to these, there was another, much larger issue addressed by the Prophet (ﷺ) in what came to be called the Covenant of Madinah. He not only addressed the needs and concerns of his followers — the Muslims — but also those of the non-Muslims that included both the *mushriks* and Jews residing in Madinah and its surroundings. What kind of relations would the Muslims have with them, especially if an Islamic (ideological) State were to be established in which the non-Muslims did not have confidence, and why would the non-Muslims abide by the rules being implemented there? While no Muslim would dare to even think of disobeying the Prophet (ﷺ), the same could not be said about the non-Muslims. If they were convinced the rules being

established in society would serve their interests as well, there would be greater likelihood of their deference. Befitting the just *sunan* of Allah (ﷻ) and His chosen executives, the Prophets (ﷺ), these rules were not imposed by force. The consent of all the people was sought and obtained; and the rules were written down as a testimony to each participating party's voluntary endorsement. This also highlights the leadership qualities of the Prophet (ﷺ); everyone accepted him as the leader and agreed to follow the rules he ordained. It is to this aspect that we now turn our attention and analyze its importance in the establishment and consolidation of the Islamic State.

It must be borne in mind that such concepts as a state with a constitution, much less a written one, were not known at the time. The notion of a "social contract" between the state and its citizens was equally alien to them. Only tribal law, transmitted through an oral tradition, governed relations between members of society. To establish a state in such an environment and then implement its laws successfully was a remarkable achievement. Most people tend to follow the traditions they are accustomed to because they become part of life's routine, the repetition of which develops into a "comfort zone" whose boundaries people are unlikely to breach. Any idea or concept that is unfamiliar makes them feel uncomfortable and therefore, resistant to change. It requires a charismatic leader to motivate people to part with the old ways and adopt something new.

This is what the Prophet (ﷺ) achieved with the Covenant of Madinah. It is regarded as the first written document prepared under the directions of the Prophet (ﷺ). While it was the first written constitution given to mankind, it was not his first written document per se. Discussed earlier in Chapters 1 and 2 were his letter to the Abyssinian king, the Negus Aṣḥam, introducing his cousin Ja'far ibn Abī Ṭālib (رضي الله عنه) and seeking the king's help in providing sanctuary for the Muslims; and the written note given to Surāqah ibn Mālik at the latter's request during the migration from Makkah to Madinah. The Covenant of Madinah, however, stands out as a unique document. It establishes the power and authority of the

Prophet (ﷺ) even though the majority of people in Madinah had not become Muslims yet, and spells out the duties and responsibilities of all signing parties including the Prophet (ﷺ).

The 47-point charter that granted the same rights to the Jews as to the Muslims bears eloquent testimony to the Prophet's (ﷺ) deep sense of justice, fairness, and generosity. In Makkah the Qurayshī chiefs had not only tortured and brutalized the Muslims but also spared no effort in ridiculing the Prophet (ﷺ), describing him as “mad” and “power-hungry” (*nastaghfir-allāh*). In order to rationalize their rejection of his prophethood, they had even approached the Jewish rabbis in Yathrib requesting them to frame questions based on their knowledge of scripture. The Makkan chiefs believed that since the Prophet (ﷺ) would not be able to answer these questions, he would be “exposed.” The three questions, narrated in *Sūrah al-Kahf*, were of course, answered fully when Allah (ﷻ) revealed to His Prophet (ﷺ) the details he could not otherwise have known. Although the obdurate Makkan *mushriks* continued to reject his prophethood despite the illuminating answers to the rabbi-inspired questions, the Yahūdī rabbis realized he indeed was the Prophet (ﷺ) foretold in their books, but this, like their Makkan allies, did not diminish their hostility. Despite their stubbornness the Prophet (ﷺ) extended to them a hand of peace when he arrived in Madinah, giving them respect as People of the Book. He granted the Jewish people the same status as the Muslims, far more favorable than that given to the *mushriks*, but as the Qur'an, Hadith, and *Sīrah* literature show, the Yahūd repeatedly violated their covenant with the Prophet (ﷺ) and missed no opportunity to undermine his mission or cause him harm.

### **Yathrib at the Time of the Hijrah**

The Covenant of Madinah must be viewed against the backdrop of the conditions prevailing in Yathrib and the overall framework of life in Arabia at the time. The city's name derives from either the Arabic source word *t-r-b* — which may be associated with the ancient Yemenī cites of Turībaḥ and Turābaḥ, or the valley of

Turbān located between Madinah and al-Ḥafīr — or the source word *th-r-b* — which could be related to an ancient fortress in Yemen, Tharabān.<sup>9</sup> After the migration of the Prophet (ﷺ), it was renamed Madīnah al-Nabī (the Prophet's (ﷺ) city), or Madinah for short. Madinah was an oasis town with palm trees and lush gardens; agriculture was the mainstay of life. While the Madinan tribes were sedentary, life was not organized in the manner of Makkah where Dār al-Nadwaḥ was established for the city's notables to meet and discuss issues of mutual concern. Compared to Madinah where local tribal customs dominated the social atmosphere, Makkah was much more cosmopolitan; its affairs were more structured and its citizens were more familiar with peoples and customs of distant lands largely because trading caravans regularly took them in and out of the Peninsula and the Ka'bah brought in all sorts of visitors. Madinah was in a sense a sleepy political and social backwater.

Several tribes resided in Yathrib at the time of the Prophet's (ﷺ) migration. In addition to the two dominant Arabian tribes — the Aws and the Khazraj and their twelve sub-clans — there were three major Jewish tribes as well — Banū Qaynuqā', Banū al-Naḍīr, and Banū Qurayẓah. They had 10 sub-clans and were allied with the Arabian tribes in a manner that virtually ensured perpetual conflict in Yathrib: Banū Qaynuqā' were allies of the Khazraj and lived inside the city while the other two, living on the periphery, were allied with the Aws.<sup>10</sup> The Aws and Khazraj tribes were bitter rivals even though they were descendants of two brothers — Aws and Khazraj from the Yemenī tribe of Qaḥṭān.<sup>11</sup> They had fought numerous wars until finally exhausted by the Bu'āth War, which left them even more vulnerable to exploitation by the Yahūd. Their fortunes, however, changed when the Prophet (ﷺ) met a group of Khazrajī pilgrims during the Hajj in Makkah. Six of them embraced Islam<sup>12</sup> although, as Ibn Ishāq narrates, two individuals — Suwayd ibn Thābit and Iyās ibn Mu'adh — had preceded this conversion<sup>13</sup> prior to the outbreak of the Bu'āth War; these two earlier conversions had no visible impact on the other people in Madinah.

Following the conversion of the six Khazrajīs at the time of Hajj, Islam gained a tentative foothold in Madinah — a situation

that proved to be more promising than the one in Makkah where scores of conversions had only served to increase the antipathy against the Prophet (ﷺ). In the ensuing year, seven more pilgrims accompanied five of those who had become Muslims the previous year, and they too accepted Islam in what came to be known as the First Pact of 'Aqabah. At their request, the Prophet (ﷺ) dispatched one of his companions and relatives, Muṣ'ab ibn 'Umayr (رضي الله عنه) of the 'Abd al-Dār clan, to Yathrib to teach them the Qur'an as well as to propagate the new Islamic message throughout the city. Muṣ'ab (رضي الله عنه) was so successful in his mission that a year later he led 73 men and two women to Makkah where these Yathribis made a *bay'ah* (pledge of allegiance) to the Prophet (ﷺ). The group included leaders of the two principal Arabian tribes from Yathrib — the Aws and the Khazraj. This is referred to as the Second Pact of 'Aqabah.<sup>14</sup>

Islam had an immediate impact on life in Yathrib. Its acceptance by even a small number of people ended the bitter rivalry between the two tribes as members of both became Muslims. But it also led to some problems: the *mushriks* still constituted a majority and viewed the introduction of Islam as creating new divisions within their ranks. More serious was the animosity it aroused in 'Abdullāh ibn Ubayy ibn Sallūl, who had been nominated, at the conclusion of the Bu'āth War, to become the king of all of Yathrib. While he belonged to the Khazraj tribe, their rival Aws, equally anxious for peace, had also agreed to accept him as their king. 'Abdullāh ibn Ubayy turned out to be a thorn in the side of the Muslims and missed no opportunity to undermine and betray them repeatedly, especially at the most critical moments. He even aligned himself with the Quraysh of Makkah against his fellow Madinans.<sup>15</sup>

In addition to their presence in Madinah, the Jewish tribes were particularly strong in Khaybar, their main base and stronghold, an oasis town north of Madinah. Its fertile lands made the inhabitants extremely rich. In Madinah, the Jews dominated commerce (sales and distribution) while the Arabians concentrated on agriculture (production), resulting in the oft-repeated "free market" scenario of the producers being indebted to the distributors. Because of the Jews' knowledge of scripture, the Aws and Khazraj



considered them as their spiritual peers. However, the Jews felt differently about themselves; they frequently threatened the Arabians about the advent of a new prophet whose appearance, they said, would put an end to the Arabians' *mushrik* and errant ways. While the Yahūd knew the new prophet would appear in this area — hence their decision to settle in Yathrib — when he actually came, they refused to accept his message, assuming that he should have come from Banū Isrā'īl. Under the erroneous and racist illusion that Banū Isrā'īl owned prophethood, they spared no effort to undermine the mission of this Arab “imposter” (*nastaghfir-allāh*). Despite such hostility, the Prophet (ﷺ) extended to them every courtesy and treated them with great kindness.

### Jewish Presence in the Arabian Peninsula

In order to get a better handle on how long Jews have lived in the Arabian Peninsula, it would be advisable to look closely at the *tafsīr* of some of the first few *āyāt* of *Sūrah al-Hashr*. Because the Qur'an is not a reference point for most Muslims in laying out the facts of life, it has generally been forgotten that another name for *Sūrah al-Hashr* is *Sūrah Banī al-Naḍir*. Reiterating facts mentioned earlier, Banū al-Naḍir was one of three Jewish tribes in Yathrib at the time of the Prophet's (ﷺ) arrival there as head of state. *Sūrah Banī al-Naḍir* was revealed in 4AH after both the Battles of Badr and Uhūd had been concluded. It talks about the hostile nature of these Yahūd to revelation, to Allah's Prophets (ﷺ), and to the systems of guidance brought down for humanity's benefit; in this manner it sheds light on some of the darkest human characters in history and on earth. Allah (ﷻ) says,

All that is in the celestial spheres and all that is on earth extols Allah's limitless glory: for He alone is Almighty, Truly Wise. He it is who turned out of their homes, at the time of [their] first gathering [for war], such of the followers of earlier revelation as were bent on denying the truth. You did not think [O Muslims]

that they would depart [without resistance], just as they thought that their strongholds would protect them against Allah. But Allah came upon them in a manner which they had not expected, and cast terror into their hearts; [and thus] they destroyed their homes by their own hands as well as the hands of the committed Muslims. Learn a lesson, then, O you who are endowed with insight!

And had it not been for Allah's having ordained banishment for them, He would indeed have imposed [yet greater] suffering on them in this world. Still, in the life to come there awaits them suffering through fire: this, because they cut themselves off from Allah and His Apostle. And as for him who cuts himself off from Allah and His Apostle, verily, Allah is severe in retribution! (59:1–4).

In these *āyāt*, *al-ladhīna kafarū min ahl al-kitāb* or “...the followers of earlier revelation [who] were bent on denying the truth” refers to Banū al-Naḍīr and the context refers to why they were expelled from Madinah. The reasons for their expulsion from Madinah at the time of Muhammad (ﷺ) are the same as the reasons for their evacuation from Palestine during the prophethood of Mūsā (عليه السلام), pointing to the fact that their essential character has remained unchanged, never warming up to accepting the responsibilities assigned to them by Allah (ﷻ) and serial Prophets (ﷺ).

Banū al-Naḍīr and Banū Qurayẓah were cousins who traced their ancestry all the way back to Hārūn, the brother of Mūsā (عليه السلام). At a time when their ancestors were still in and around Jerusalem, Mūsā (عليه السلام) dispatched them on a military mission against the Amalekites in what today is known as the West Bank. On their way to the engagement, Mūsā (عليه السلام) passed away; upon hearing of his death, they returned to their homes in Jericho (Ariḥah) without doing battle with the enemy as Mūsā (عليه السلام) had commanded. For failing to live up to their military responsibilities, they were rejected by their own people and banished. So they left Palestine and

resettled in the part of the Ḥijāz that came to be called Yathrib. Almost two millenia later, their descendants stealthily manipulated the opposition against the final Prophet (ﷺ) in the same way they had been troublesome for Mūsá (عليه السلام) after he delivered them from the oppression of Egypt's Pharaoh.<sup>16</sup>

When the Prophet (ﷺ) arrived in Yathrib, they entered into a general agreement with him along with all the other Arabian factions in the city. At the very least, they consented not to antagonize the Prophet (ﷺ) and not to enter into any hostile arrangements or alliances against the Prophet (ﷺ), his leadership, and the Islamic State in Madinah. At first, after the Muslims' victory at the Battle of Badr, they felt somewhat comfortable with the agreement they had signed with the Prophet (ﷺ) and even considered him to be the prophet foretold in their scriptures. However, when the Muslims were less than triumphant at Uḥud, these Yahūdīs began to reconsider their internal thoughts, suggesting that if Muhammad (ﷺ) was truly a man of God, he would never lose an engagement against the *mushriks*. Such thinking goes back to their racist, bloodline sense of entitlement where they felt that victory should be served up on a silver platter regardless of their spiritual or moral character on the one hand, and regardless of their military, political, and social commitment on the other. And so after Uḥud, they began reaching out to the *mushrik* stronghold in Makkah, hoping to reach an understanding with them, despite the fact that they had agreed with the Prophet (ﷺ) to not enter into an alliance with the Qurayshī *kāfirs*. To this end Ka'b ibn al-Ashraf went with 40 mounted individuals to Makkah from Madinah to develop an alliance with Abū Sufyān and the Quraysh who were at war with the Prophet (ﷺ) and the Islamic State.

After reaching a cozy position with Abū Sufyān, Ka'b confidently returned to Madinah, but the Prophet (ﷺ) knew what was going on and characterized Ka'b's action for what it was: treason. And thus the Prophet (ﷺ) tasked Muḥammad ibn Maslamah (رضي الله عنه) with eliminating the treacherous Ka'b ibn al-Ashraf for breaking the agreement he had entered into earlier by forming an alliance with the Qurayshī enemy.

When and how the other Jews, namely Banū Qaynuqā', came to dwell in Arabia, especially in Yathrib, is not entirely clear. Scholars differ regarding the date of their arrival but most trace their presence in Yathrib to their expulsion from Palestine in the year 135CE when the Romans crushed the second Bar Kokhba Revolt, thereby dispersing them "throughout the coastlands of the Mediterranean."<sup>17</sup> Some of them found their way into the Arabian Peninsula as well, settling in and around Yathrib. Jewish scholars cite 70CE as the beginning of their presence in Yathrib following the Jewish uprising in Jerusalem.<sup>18</sup>

After their expulsion from Palestine in 135CE, the Jews still faced a threat from the Byzantines, adherents of the East Roman Church who controlled al-Shām (present-day Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, and Jordan). The Byzantines repeatedly invaded Yathrib to try and wipe out the Jews but never fully succeeded, hence they struck an alliance with the Aws and Khazraj tribes to undermine Yahūdī influence. The Arabian tribes of Yathrib welcomed such a direct alliance not only because it conferred a higher level of importance on them, but also because the Jews held them in debt and exploited them economically by purchasing their agricultural produce for a pittance. Following this alliance, the Jews realized that their position would weaken because now they faced both internal as well as external threats, so they decided to align themselves strategically with the rival Aws and Khazraj tribes to keep them divided. In this they succeeded so completely that within a few years they dominated both the political and economic life of Yathrib, becoming its principal moneylenders.<sup>19</sup>

It was the Yahūdī leaders who had instigated the Bu'āth War between the rival Arabian tribes resulting in huge losses on both sides. Interestingly, while the Jewish tribes were aligned with the two warring Arabian tribes, they suffered relatively few casualties. The Aws-Khazraj enmity ended only when some of them embraced Islam during their pilgrimage to Makkah. This also dealt a blow to the machinations of the Yahūdī leaders to divide them, hence their hostility to the Prophet (ﷺ) despite recognizing him as the bearer of the divine message. The Prophet (ﷺ), however, viewed them as

People of the Book and as followers of a monotheistic faith, and believed they would accept his message recognizing its divine origin more easily than the *mushriks*. He made great efforts to cultivate their elites and rabbis, inviting them into al-Masjid al-Nabawī. The Prophet (ﷺ) engaged them in dialogue and conferred upon them the same position as the Muslims in the Covenant of Madinah.

### **Binding Important Constituencies into an Agreement**

In Makkah, the Muslims were a persecuted minority; while there was no persecution in Madinah, they were still initially a minority and faced a new set of challenges. The Prophet (ﷺ) could foresee that the Qurayshī chiefs would not leave him in peace just because the Muslims had left Makkah and settled in Madinah. On the contrary, Muslim presence in Madinah was viewed as a serious challenge for two reasons: first, it provided the Muslims a base from which to operate, and second, the Makkan trade caravans en route to Syria had to pass nearby Madinah. If the Muslims gained a foothold and established a stable presence in Madinah, it would threaten a vital Qurayshī trade route and, therefore, undermine their dominant position in the Peninsula. The Makkans were not likely to allow this to happen, hence it was only a matter of time before they launched an attack against Madinah. The Prophet (ﷺ), foreseeing this, prepared for such an eventuality. The best way to defend Madinah was to create internal cohesion. Given tribal divisions, this was not easy but through his wisdom and incomparable leadership qualities, the Prophet (ﷺ) was able to establish this *ittiḥād* fairly quickly without much opposition. It needs recalling that a majority of the people in Madinah had not yet accepted Islam, so getting their agreement to an arrangement in which the Prophet's (ﷺ) authority was recognized and accepted by all groups required great *ḥikmah*. It must also be pointed out that the Prophet (ﷺ) had no intention of allowing the Makkan traders free passage through the area. In fact, he was determined to impose an economic blockade on their trade but a prerequisite for this was the consolidation of his own power base in Madinah.

He achieved this through what came to be called the Covenant of Madinah. Some historians have used different names to characterize this agreement. Dr. Ḥamīdullāh, for instance, calls it a *command* or *order*. He bases his understanding on the meaning of the word *kitābah* used at the beginning of the Covenant.<sup>20</sup> R.A. Nicholson has described it as a *charter*,<sup>21</sup> while both Montgomery Watt and J.J. Saunders refer to it as *constitution*.<sup>22</sup> This author prefers the word *covenant* because it signifies an agreement between various parties.

Did the Prophet (ﷺ) consult others before compiling the Covenant of Madinah? Most Sīrah books are silent on this point but given his general approach in building commitment through a process of *ownership*, the Prophet (ﷺ) must have consulted the chiefs of Madinah and obtained their consent before committing to writing the charter that was finally established. Dr. Ḥamīdullāh points this out quoting references from hadith books.<sup>23</sup> The Prophet (ﷺ) had a clear vision about what he wanted to achieve in Madinah; a glimpse into his thinking was provided by what he told the pilgrims from Yathrib during the Second Pact of ‘Aqabaḥ in Minā (Makkah). He asked them to agree to a military pact in which they would together “confront and repel aggression.”<sup>24</sup> Even before arriving in the city, he had known about the Aws-Khazraj rivalry as well as the presence of Jewish tribes and their role in instigating conflict between the two Arabian power factions. He was also aware that there was no formal administrative or power structure like the one existing in Makkah. Getting people to agree to live under a formal arrangement was bound to pose a major challenge.

There were several other challenges the Prophet (ﷺ) faced in Madinah. These included but were not limited to:

1. preventing discord by creating internal cohesion and harmony in Madinah by a set of rules to which all parties would agree and adhere to;
2. defending Madinah against the much anticipated attack of the Quraysh; and,
3. engaging the numerous tribes west of Madinah — some of them strategically located along the trade route to Syria — and entering into alliances with them or, at the very least,

convincing them to remain neutral in the event of conflict with the Quraysh of Makkah.

While the Muhājirūn were fully committed to fighting the would-be Makkan invaders, having experienced great hardships at their hands for 13 years, the Anṣār of Madinah had no direct enmity with them nor did they have an obligation to fight them. In fact some from among the Anṣār had alliances with the Makkan chiefs. Sa'd ibn Mu'adh, leader of the Aws tribe, for instance, was an ally of Umayyah ibn Khalaf, chief of the Jumah clan and a one-time master of Bilāl (رضي الله عنه), whom he used to torture mercilessly. Bilāl (رضي الله عنه) was ransomed by Abū Bakr (رضي الله عنه) and relieved of the burden of slavery. Within six months of the migration of the Prophet (ﷺ) to Madinah, Sa'd ibn Mu'adh went to Makkah to perform 'Umrah. As an ally, Umayyah ibn Khalaf was bound by tradition to provide him protection despite the objections of Abū Jahl who was already angry because the people of Madinah had provided sanctuary to the Prophet (ﷺ) and his companions. Further, the Madinans had vowed to defend him if Madinah were attacked but had no obligation to fight outside the city or to initiate hostilities.

Similarly, the Jewish tribes in Madinah had not pledged even that, much less fight against the Prophet's (ﷺ) enemies. If the Quraysh attacked Madinah, their target would be the Muslim migrants from Makkah, not the Muslim or non-Muslim Arabians of Madinah or the Jews. How all the people of Madinah were to be convinced to participate in the defense of the city was a matter that required delicate handling. It was in such early tentative days in Madinah that the Prophet's (ﷺ) great statesmanship emerged so clearly, especially through the Covenant of Madinah. One of the qualities of a great leader is his ability to foresee the future based on current behaviors and attitudes, and plan for it accordingly. The Prophet (ﷺ) was both the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) and a leader possessing great ability and wisdom.

The Covenant was an important document as it outlined the rights and duties of each group as well as their allies. Let us consider the Covenant before we analyze its clauses in greater detail.

### The Covenant of Madinah

Before reviewing the articles of the Covenant, let us consider some salient features of what constitutes a state in contemporary political thought. A *state* is said to be “composed of the following four essential elements or attributes: population, land or territory, government, and sovereignty.”<sup>25</sup> Other definitions include, “...the sovereign political entity of a fixed territory; the supreme civil authority recognized by a politically organized people of a given geographical area...”<sup>26</sup>

Western political theory considers “people” to be *sovereign*; even though the word *people* and how decisions are made on behalf of this group has never been clearly defined in Western representative mechanisms. Broadly generalizing with certain high-sounding platitudes — and this is how those who seek to grab power begin to weave in corrupt ideas into society’s general psyche — the theory suggests that people are free to make all decisions based on their personal preferences exclusive of any other considerations, especially those related to the “oppressive” and “divisive” application of God’s laws. People decide what is right or wrong at a particular moment in history. Thus, the death penalty, for instance, for what was previously considered to be a capital offense is no longer imposed in most Western societies. In the field of social behavior, Western ideas have become even more extreme since Western thought is subject to the ideological whims of certain groups of special interests at any given time. In the more extreme case, if a majority of people in a given territory were to decide to oppress a minority, then apparently no moral constraints could hold them back from legalizing it. In fact, such legal rationalizations of the “people” were used to exterminate the Native American populations as European-style nation-states emerged in the new world. Similarly, most Western societies do not consider marriage to be important anymore and having children out of wedlock is now perfectly acceptable. The definition of family has also undergone numerous changes; there is no conception of what used to be called a traditional family.

Islam has a completely different perspective on these issues, particularly the concept of sovereignty. Man is not sovereign, only Allah (ﷻ) is. Man’s position is that of the *khalifah* (representative,



vicegerent, or trustee) of Allah (ﷻ) on earth; he is not free to do as he pleases. Man must abide by the laws ordained for him by Allah (ﷻ). Islam's laws are, therefore, not subject to human likes or dislikes at any particular time. In fact, the behavior of man is measured by the truth and not the other way around; the truth is self-validating and self-evident, requiring no support from any other source, not even a human one, or even support from influential humans. This is how Allah (ﷻ) has structured the truth; one only needs to think about it to understand it and such faculties are equally available to every human being — and this is what is truly liberating. During the schismatic political crisis which paralyzed the early *khilāfah*, 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib (ﷺ) was asked by one of his companions, while both were on their way to Baṣrah (in Iraq), "Is it possible for 'Ā'ishah, Ṭalhah, and al-Zubayr to agree on something wrong?" Obviously, the three personalities mentioned (ﷺ) are not lightweights in the formative Islamic history and this is why the question apparently carries so much weight. The Imam (ﷺ), unfazed by the human tendency of elevating its own importance above the truth, cleared up the confusion quickly and decisively,

You are a man cloaked in confusion; for indeed the *ḥaqq* and the *bāṭil* are not to be known by [or defined by] the actions, potentialities, and ideas of men [no matter who they are]. Know the *ḥaqq*, [thereby] you will be able to identify those who live by it [the *ḥaqq*]; and know the *bāṭil*, [thereby] you will be able to identify those who support it [the *bāṭil*].<sup>27</sup>

This means that what is prohibited by Allah (ﷻ) cannot be made lawful by man nor can man prohibit what has been made lawful by Allah (ﷻ). This is not the only area where Islam's view is radically different from that of the West.

There is a finer point relating to territory. While territory is one of the requirements for a state, it is not essential from the Islamic point of view. In Makkah, the Prophet (ﷺ) did not have a territory under his control but he still had authority over the small

group of people who followed him. The Makkan situation has been referred to as a “non-territorial” Islamic state.<sup>28</sup> In the book, *In Pursuit of the Power of Islam: Major Writings of Kalim Siddiqui*, Dr. Siddiqui writes “...the procedures and historical processes required to establish the Islamic State are inseparable parts of Islam. Islam, therefore, is incomplete without the Islamic State.”<sup>29</sup>

Let us return to the generally accepted elements that constitute a state. A state is an area with defined borders wherein its laws apply. It also has leaders who are supposed to govern with the consent of the people. The state is required to provide protection to those living within its borders as well as to ensure their security and well-being. Such other requirements as food, education, and health are also considered part of the state’s responsibilities. The people in turn support the state both through physical participation such as joining the army for its defense and through some form of taxation to bear the cost of administering its affairs. The requirements outlined above have evolved over centuries with various types of governments emerging; the duties and responsibilities of states toward their citizens are also well established now. As discussed earlier, such concepts were unknown at the time of the Prophet (ﷺ), especially in Arabia where tribalism reigned supreme.

Did the state the Prophet (ﷺ) established in Madinah fulfill these requirements and what role did the Covenant of Madinah play in their fulfillment and how did it consolidate power in the hands of the Prophet (ﷺ)? Some scholars, like Muḥammad Badawī, have referred to the state in Madinah as the “oldest known form of *state* in the political organization of human history.” In commenting on Dr. Badawī’s work, Professor al-‘Awwā adds his own note, “This is so [oldest state] because it established the principle of legality which means submission of state to rule of law, but making it superior to other contemporary political entities as well as those in preceding eras.”<sup>30</sup>

**Exhibit 8** – The Covenant of Madinah composed shortly after the Prophet (ﷺ) arrived in the city.

In the name of Allah, the Mercy-Giving, the Merciful.

**Article 1:** This is a document [initiated] by Muhammad the Prophet [Messenger of Allah] between [the following agreeing parties]: the *mu'mins* and *muslims* from the Quraysh;<sup>31</sup> the people of Yathrib;<sup>32</sup> and those who followed them, joined them, and fought alongside them.

**Article 2:** That the [aforementioned] parties [in Article 1] shall henceforth constitute one *ummaḥ* distinctive from all other peoples.

**Article 3:** The Muhājirūn from Quraysh constitute a self-contained, semi-autonomous constituency<sup>33</sup> that shall look after its own internally disadvantaged members with the kind of fair-minded civility [*ma'rūf*] and institutional justice [*qisṭ*] befitting [a relationship among] committed Muslims.

**Article 4:** And [similarly], Banū 'Awf constitute a self-contained, semi-autonomous constituency that shall look after its own internally disadvantaged members with the kind of fair-minded civility [*ma'rūf*] and institutional justice [*qisṭ*] befitting [a relationship among] committed Muslims.

**Article 5:** And [similarly], Banū al-Ḥārith [from al-Khazraj] constitute a self-contained, semi-autonomous constituency that shall look after its own internally disadvantaged members with the kind of fair-minded civility [*ma'rūf*] and institutional justice [*qisṭ*] befitting [a relationship among] committed Muslims.

**Article 6:** And [similarly], Banū Sā'idah constitute a self-contained, semi-autonomous constituency that shall look after its own internally disadvantaged members with the kind of fair-minded civility [*ma'rūf*] and institutional justice [*qisṭ*] befitting [a relationship among] committed Muslims.

**Article 7:** And [similarly], Banū Jusham constitute a self-contained, semi-autonomous constituency that shall look after its own internally disadvantaged members with the kind of fair-minded civility [*ma'rūf*] and institutional justice [*qisṭ*] befitting [a relationship among] committed Muslims.

**Article 8:** And [similarly], Banū al-Najjār constitute a self-contained, semi-autonomous constituency that shall look after its own internally disadvantaged members with the kind of fair-minded civility [*ma'rūf*] and institutional justice [*qisṭ*] befitting [a relationship among] committed Muslims.

**Article 9:** And [similarly], Banū 'Amr ibn 'Awf constitute a self-contained, semi-autonomous constituency that shall look after its own internally disadvantaged members with the kind of fair-minded civility [*ma'rūf*] and institutional justice [*qisṭ*] befitting [a relationship among] committed Muslims.

**Article 10:** And [similarly], Banū al-Nabīṭ constitute a self-contained, semi-autonomous constituency that shall look after its own internally disadvantaged members with the kind of fair-minded civility [*ma'rūf*] and institutional justice [*qisṭ*] befitting [a relationship among] committed Muslims.

**Article 11:** And [similarly], Banū al-Aws constitute a self-contained, semi-autonomous constituency that shall look after its own internally disadvantaged members with the kind of fair-minded civility [*ma'rūf*] and institutional justice [*qist*] befitting [a relationship among] committed Muslims.

**Article 12:** And that the committed Muslims shall not abandon an overburdened person<sup>34</sup> amongst themselves except that they compensate him according to the accepted standard of living and provide for him, and offer him refuge; and that no committed Muslim shall take issue [pick a fight] with the *mawlá*<sup>35</sup> of another committed Muslim [who is junior to him].<sup>36</sup>

**Article 13:** And that the committed Muslims — who are conscious of Allah's power presence — shall be against anyone amongst their own who takes to aggression, or seeks an inclination toward aggression, or seeks infraction, assault, or corruption among the committed Muslims; and [if such were to occur], everyone's potential will unite against the offending party even though he may be one of their [own] sons.

**Article 14:** And no committed Muslim shall slay another committed Muslim [in retaliation] for [his slaying of] a *kāfir*;<sup>37</sup> nor shall he give support to a *kāfir* against a committed Muslim.

**Article 15:** And that Allah's guarantee [of protection] is one and indivisible, so [he who is considered to be] the least of the committed Muslims is on par with the rest [in matters pertaining] to representation for them all;<sup>38</sup>

and that the committed Muslims are complements of one another against all other men.

**Article 16:** And that whoever from the Jews merges with us shall be assisted and acclaimed; and none [of them] shall be offended and beleaguered.

**Article 17:** And that the truce and non-belligerency of the committed Muslims is indivisible: a *mu'min* does not break from the rest to enact a separate “truce” in matters pertaining to a struggle on a course to Allah, except under conditions of reciprocal equivalency<sup>39</sup> and mutual justice.

**Article 18:** And that each fighting force participating in our military campaigns shall be acknowledged in their sequential order.<sup>40</sup>

**Article 19:** And that all committed Muslims are equal to each other as they sacrifice/shed their blood for the cause of Allah; no one's blood is more precious than another's.

**Article 20:** And that the power-conscious, committed Muslims are on a path of perfect and meticulous guidance [from Allah]; and that no *mushrik*<sup>41</sup> is allowed to harbor wealth or persons belonging to Quraysh to the detriment of any committed Muslim.

**Article 21:** And that whosoever with foreknowledge and premeditation murders a committed Muslim shall be liable to the victim's next-of-kin; unless the latter are satisfied [with monetary compensation], the murderer

shall be held to the law of retribution by the citizenry of committed Muslims — without default by the committed Muslims.<sup>42</sup>

**Article 22:** And that it is unlawful for a committed Muslim who has agreed to this document — and who is compliant to Allah and the eventuality of the Final Day — to assist or shelter a felon; and whoever does so shall incur the damnation of Allah and His wrath on the Day of Resurrection. And neither dismissal nor a swap arrangement<sup>43</sup> shall be acceptable from him.

**Article 23:** And that whatever issue you disagree upon must be referred to Allah and to Muhammad [for final judgment].

**Article 24:** And that the Jews along with the committed Muslims are to spend [for the public interest] during conditions of war.

**Article 25:** And that the Jews of Banū ‘Awf are a [recognized] community alongside the committed Muslims — the Jews having their *dīn* and the Muslims having their *dīn*. This applies to [all] their dependents and their own selves, except for the unjust or the criminal [those in violation of the law] — they do harm to none other than themselves and their clan.

**Article 26:** And that the Jews of Banū al-Najjār are entitled to what the Jews of Banū ‘Awf are entitled.

**Article 27:** And that the Jews of Banū al-Ḥārith are entitled to what the Jews of Banū ‘Awf are entitled.

**Article 28:** And that the Jews of Banū Sā'idaḥ are entitled to what the Jews of Banū 'Awf are entitled.

**Article 29:** And that the Jews of Banū Jusham are entitled to what the Jews of Banū 'Awf are entitled.

**Article 30:** And that the Jews of Banū al-Aws are entitled to what the Jews of Banū 'Awf are entitled.

**Article 31:** And that the Jews of Banū Tha'labah are entitled to what the Jews of Banū 'Awf are entitled, except if they are in violation of the law of the land [the unjust and the criminal] — for such do harm to none other than themselves and their clan.

**Article 32:** And that Jafnah is a bloodline of Tha'labah and thus are entitled to the same.

**Article 33:** And that Banū Shuṭaybah are entitled to what the Jews of Banū 'Awf are entitled, recognizing the accessibility of virtue and the abhorrence of vice.

**Article 34:** And that the clients of Tha'labah have the same [legal] standing as Tha'labah.

**Article 35:** And that likewise, the affiliates of the Jews have the same [legal] standing as the Jews themselves.

**Article 36:** And that none of the foregoing [parties] shall constitute a military fighting force except with the permission of Muhammad; and that none shall be barred from exacting revenge for an injustice inflicted upon him. Whoever murders [another] does so to himself and



his kin, except for he who has been oppressed, for Allah accepts this [re]action.

**Article 37:** And that the Jews shall bear their own expenses as will the Muslims. And that between them is [a pledge of] mutual assistance against whomever wages war on the signatories of this document; and that their relationship shall be one of mutual advice, counsel, and virtue rather than harm and aggression. However, no man is to be held accountable for a crime committed by his ally; assistance is due to the party suffering oppression [not the one perpetrating it].

**Article 38:** And that the [aforementioned] Jews are to share in the financial dues alongside the committed Muslims during a state of war.

**Article 39:** And that the signatories to this document agree that Yathrib proper<sup>44</sup> is never to become a war zone.

**Article 40:** And that a neighbor's life is as sacrosanct as their own [lives], as long as he is not guilty of a felony or he commits no crime.

**Article 41:** And that no woman shall be given protection without the consent of her family.

**Article 42:** And that whatever may develop into a dispute or disagreement among the signatories to this document, potentially threatening its integrity, must be referred to Allah and to Muhammad, the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) — as Allah remains the guardian of this document's truth and good will.

**Article 43:** And that neither the Quraysh nor any of its supporters shall be offered [any] assistance or aid.

**Article 44:** And that the signatories to this document are mutually bound to assist each other when Yathrib is under attack.

**Article 45:** And if they [occupants of Madinah] are called to a truce, they shall respond to terms of a fitting truce. And if, on the other hand, they [the *kāfirs*] call upon the committed Muslims for a truce, the Muslims shall be bound to do so, provided that a truce is not reached with those who maintain a war strategy against Islam as a *dīn*. And that every minor party to this document shall shoulder its responsibilities proportionately.<sup>45</sup>

**Article 46:** And that the Jews of al-Aws, as well as their clients, are entitled to the stipulations of this document on par with the other participating parties — with the absolute virtue inclusive therein. The honor and authentication of this document stands in contrast to its breach and violation. Any violator [of the document's terms] inflicts damage upon his own self. And Allah bears witness to the truth, validity, and honor of this document.

**Article 47:** And that this document shall constitute no protection for the offender or the criminal. Every movement into and out of Madinah is safe and secure except when it is done by an offender or criminal. And Allah safeguards persons of virtue and people who are conscious of His power-presence; and Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ).<sup>46</sup>

### Defining the Boundaries of the State

By declaring “...that Yathrib is never to become a war zone” (Article 39), the physical boundaries of the state were clearly defined. The designation of Madinah as a *ḥarām* (a place where war is to be avoided) not only elevated it to a status similar to that of Makkah but it also ensured peace within its boundaries and made it incumbent on everyone to defend it if any outside force attacked the city-state. Article 40 also extended sanctuary to the neighbors of the parties to the Covenant provided they did not commit any crimes and refrained from causing harm to others. Article 44 made it incumbent upon the people “...to assist each other when Yathrib is under attack.” The defense of the state was compulsory for all people, including the Jews, their allies, and clients, and, all the other tribes, be they Muslim or not, of any tribe. Article 17 further stipulated: “...a mu'min does not break from the rest [Muslim or non-Muslim] to enact a 'separate' truce in matters pertaining to a struggle on a course to Allah.” It similarly spelled out what each party's financial obligations were to bear the cost of any war. The Jews were expected to bear their own costs just like the Muslims (Articles 24 and 38). By identifying the Quraysh as the enemies of the Islamic State in Madinah, it was forbidden to give them or their allies any protection (Article 43). The prohibition was extended even to the *mushriks* as stated in Article 20: “...no mushrik shall be allowed to harbor wealth or persons belonging to Quraysh to the detriment of committed Muslims.” Naturally, once the Quraysh were identified as the enemy, those agreeing to the Covenant could not be allowed to enter into separate deals, otherwise it would undermine the defense of the Islamic State. That would constitute treason.

### Leadership and Authority of the Prophet (ﷺ)

Leadership is one of the most important requirements for the proper functioning of a state or society. Prior to the Prophet's (ﷺ) arrival, there was no unified leadership in Madinah. Each tribal chief had his own followers and his decisions applied only to them. Naturally this resulted in perpetual conflicts in society. The Covenant estab-

lished the leadership of the Prophet (ﷺ) in unambiguous terms. By stating at the very beginning (Article 1) that “*This is a document initiated by Muhammad the Prophet [Messenger of Allah], between [the following agreeing parties]: the mu’mins, and muslims from the Quraysh; the people of Yathrib and those who followed them, joined them, and fought alongside them...*,” it confirmed the power, authority and leadership of the Prophet (ﷺ). He was the one who proffered the Covenant and those who joined it did so on the basis of accepting his leadership. All disputes were to be referred to him to be decided in accordance with the divine law (Articles 23 and 42). While the Prophet (ﷺ) always consulted the people before making a decision, the tradition of multiple decision-makers in the same locality was eliminated. This naturally reduced the possibility of conflict because tribal rivalry was no longer a factor in decision-making.

This represented a paradigm shift in the way people conducted their affairs: from decisions based on personal or tribal loyalties to the principle of acting within the bounds of the divine law. Both in matters of personal disputes (Article 42) and for waging war (Article 36), they were bound by the authority of the Prophet (ﷺ) and could not initiate war without his permission. Article 36 in particular, placing complete authority in the hands of the Prophet (ﷺ) to declare war, was a radical departure from conventional practice. Hitherto, tribal chiefs took such decisions based on tribal interests. The Covenant established new rules: decision-making became the exclusive responsibility of the Prophet (ﷺ) as head of state in Madinah.

Each group’s interests were protected without compromising fundamental principles. If people were convinced they were being treated fairly, they would participate in the defense of the city should it be attacked, the most immediate threat naturally coming from the Quraysh of Makkah. Similarly, the city’s commercial interests had to be safeguarded while ensuring that everyone was treated fairly. Genuine peace would only be achieved if there was justice for all.

How was the unchallenged authority of the Prophet (ﷺ) accepted and implemented when the Muslims were clearly a minor-

ity in Madinah? And how did the Prophet (ﷺ) overcome the Yahūdī displeasure at the influx of such a large number of Muslim immigrants from Makkah? Two factors facilitated this. First, both the Aws and Khazraj tribes were thoroughly exhausted by endless wars and were looking for a way to establish peace in society. They had already agreed to make the Khazrajī chief, ‘Abdullāh ibn Ubayy ibn Sallūl, their king hoping this would formalize peace between them. Second, the arrival of Muslims led by the Prophet (ﷺ) immediately undercut the divisive Yahūdī influence in Madinah. Even the *mushriks* from among the Aws and Khazraj welcomed the Prophet’s (ﷺ) fair and just dealings. It was impossible not to be impressed by this most gentle of Allah’s (ﷻ) servants who was commissioned to elevate and perfect the *akhlāq* (manners) of all mankind.<sup>47</sup>

### The Concept of One Ummah

An *ummaḥ* is not a ready-made organization of people. It must be cultivated, nurtured, and all the individuals that make it up must conform to a unified objective. This is as true of *the* (Islamic) Ummah as any other *ummaḥ* working to achieve a certain mission. Indeed Allah (ﷻ) relates an anecdote about Mūsá (عليه السلام) in *Sūrah al-Qaṣas*, “Now when he [Mūsá] arrived at the wells of Madyan, he found there a large group of men who were drawing water [for their herds and flocks]...” (28:23). This “large group of men” is characterized by Allah (ﷻ) as an *ummaḥ*, suggesting that the act of drawing water from a well for a herd of livestock is beyond the capacities of an individual but well within the combined abilities of a fraternity of people working together. Thus an *ummaḥ* in a generic sense is many hands, one composition; many minds, one direction.

The key issue here is that an *ummaḥ* in its formative stages does not consist of like-minded people — people who are on the same page so to speak. It is the common objective that aggregates their abilities and concentrates their capacities so that the sum of their coordinated individual exertions results in an expected outcome. Indeed there would be no point to *building an ummaḥ* if all

the individuals were thinking the same way, if they all had already adopted the same problem-solving approaches, if they were from the same background, and if they had the same expectations from joint struggle. But, to collect people with different upbringings and mind-sets on a unified mission is not an easy task: it takes planning, it takes work, it requires conflict resolution mechanisms, it requires institutional channels of open communication, and it demands decisive leadership structures.

Developing a consciousness of Allah's (ﷻ) power presence, His authority, His omnipotence, and His oneness is a joint effort, a cooperative exercise; in short, it takes an *ummaḥ*. In other words, for an individual with his limited abilities, no matter how extensive they may be, to achieve this is problematic; but the collective consciousness of an entire society dedicated toward such recognition makes this possible. In the socio-political and civilizational context, this means that an *ummaḥ* in society is a group that practically understands the mission in a way that constrains it to subsume all its decisions, plans, strategies, and workflows to the overall goal of achieving the mission. All of the disparate characteristics of the people of Yathrib and the necessary requirements for them to behave as one unit committed to a mission came together in the Covenant of Madinah.

When the Prophet (ﷺ) arrived in Yathrib and immediately commenced with formulating the Covenant of Madinah so that its articles would become an obligation for all the signatories, the demographics of the city suggest that its population was around 10,000, less than 350 of which were Muslims.<sup>48</sup> Also, in broad strokes, the three major power constituencies were the Muslims, composed of the Muhājirūn and the Anṣār, the Jews, and the *ummīyūn* of Yathrib.<sup>49</sup> Therefore, comparably, the Muslims were decidedly in a minority. When news reached the residents of Yathrib that the Prophet (ﷺ) was migrating there, the air of expectation indicated they all knew, even ‘Abdullāh ibn Ubayy ibn Sallūl, the would-be king of Yathrib, that he was coming there as the undisputed leader despite the fact that his immediate followers, the Muslims, did not form anything close to a majority.

The Prophet (ﷺ) was not coming to Yathrib as a conqueror at the head of a huge army ready to subdue any opposition, lay waste to any resistance, or to ethnically cleanse or otherwise expel the local residents of Yathrib. In fact, he was coming there with only 73 followers from Makkah, at the invitation of some of the principal decision-makers from the Aws and Khazraj, who influenced the direction of public opinion in Yathrib, and who had earlier accepted Islam as a panacea to overcome their generational fratricide. They were impressed by the guidance coming from Allah (ﷻ) and the character of its impeccable representative in the person of the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ). And so, even before the Prophet (ﷺ) migrated to Yathrib, the groundswell of energy in the city — developed by the work of Mus‘ab ibn ‘Umayr (رضي الله عنه) and the early converts from the Aws and Khazraj — produced the expectation that the ones carrying the truth, and thereby the ones producing the most pacesetting ideas, that is the Muslims, would be the ones to shape the direction of transformational change in the city. It was well understood that even though the Muslims were in a minority, they would be the ones in the lead because they were the most qualified, and the Prophet (ﷺ) would be ahead of them all.

This is an exceedingly important point: the first Islamic *ummah*, the “one *ummah*” as it is characterized in Article 2, was composed mostly of non-Muslims — the Jews, the people of Yathrib, and those who followed them, joined them, and fought alongside them, all of whom had not yet become Muslims! With the Covenant of Madinah, the Prophet (ﷺ) drew all the important power constituencies in Madinah, the vast majority of whom were not Muslims, into a singular momentum whose core objective was to ensure the security of Madinah. What magnanimity! What confidence that Allah’s (ﷻ) guidance would ultimately reign supreme despite its modest beginnings! He did not say to them that they had to be Muslims in order to be recognized and represented; he did not exclude them because they had not yet committed totally to Allah (ﷻ). All the signatories who were now part of the new *ummah* in Madinah under the leadership of the Prophet (ﷺ) were given the same rights as the Muslims, though the Muslims were given an

extra set of responsibilities (Articles 12–22) to acculturate the non-Muslims into the fairness, equity, and justice of Islam. Corrupt and tyrannical power cultures interested only in usurping the resources of subjugated peoples do just the opposite: they reserve all the “rights” for themselves and heap all the responsibilities on those they humiliate.

After securing the endorsement of the most powerful factions in Madinah — the Aws and the Khazraj — the Prophet (ﷺ) could have come down with the iron fist, recognizing the Muslims as the only important constituency and excluding all others from an exclusive *ummaḥ* populated only by Muslims. He could have said that the only way a non-Muslim could enter into the *ummaḥ* was through an endorsement by a current member of the *ummaḥ*. He could have initiated class stratification similar to what we see today. But as the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ), he was not interested in replacing their previous deities with himself as the new deity, to be conformed to in the same way as they ought to have conformed to Allah (ﷻ), were they free enough, mentally and culturally, to do so. He was there to extend the Islamic benefit to all and sundry, regardless of whether the potential Muslims were noblemen, slaves, sponsored individuals (*mawlās*), or women; at the same time, no article in the document suggests that anyone would be forced to become a Muslim, and goes even further by recognizing the Jewish *dīn*. He did not enact any immigration policy to prevent people in the outlying areas from becoming Muslims in an attempt to secure the potential future benefits of Islamic transcendence for the limited number of signatories to the document.

The Prophet (ﷺ) came to Madinah not to concentrate power in a plutocratic or autocratic class, but to distribute it and then to distill the newly burgeoning energies of the people into decisive action against tyranny, subjugation, and exploitation of all kinds, be it physical, mental, or psychological. By confidently building Islamic institutions of equity and social justice, by allowing all the residents of Madinah to participate in such construction, and by requiring their involvement in all important policy decisions, the Prophet (ﷺ) was only liberating the human inclination to gravitate



naturally toward its Sustainer, and thus it was a fait accompli for the majority of Madinah's residents to become Muslims. And in time this indeed happened, less by the force of arms than by the force of conscience.

This was the *tarbiyah* of the Prophet (ﷺ): to give the people a recognition of *taqwá* while dealing with a sense of urgency using just means to accomplish legitimate ends. They would be required to learn their responsibilities and the correct associated behaviors while they were on the move. Their classroom would be the human experience of constriction, isolation, and lopsided warfare. Notice that the Prophet (ﷺ) did not start by building universities so that the early Muslims could be educated for decades in the "Islamic sciences" before they could be "trusted" to do the right thing and be "qualified" to make the right decisions. This is the kind of *tarbiyah* in vogue today that has either separated and made aloof the Muslims from their social responsibilities, or relegated the intellectual cream of Muslim societies to being indoctrinated by secular ideological bases for transformational change.

It was the Prophet (ﷺ) who took the strategic initiative to acquaint the people of Madinah with an impending crisis. The hostility of the Quraysh had followed him to Madinah, and were he not to have taken effective measures to deal with the security threat, the city-state of Madinah would not have even registered as a blip in any historical timeline of the area. The overall strategic objective was to secure the newly established territorial entity called Madinah with an *ummaḥ* dedicated to the achievement of this objective. And therefore every power constituency in the city was required to coordinate its efforts with the others so that all together could consummate this mission. Their approval of the document signified their understanding of this urgency, and the fact that one power constituency left to its own devices could not effectively resist the power of the Makkan *mushriks*. The means to accomplish this end was the Covenant of Madinah. It legitimized the political power of the Prophet (ﷺ).

For political power to be legitimate, its political ends must be moral and just. Politics, in general, concerns the exercise of non-

military power to satisfy the needs of important constituencies in a social order (country, city-state, town, village, etc.). *Good* or *just politics* relies on soft power to secure the *legitimate* needs of the society's valid constituencies. For instance, a historically oppressed ethnic minority deprived of equal opportunity and discriminated against is a valid constituency because its needs are legitimate; on the other hand, a racially homogeneous majority that uses its numerical superiority to legislate against minorities is an invalid constituency because its needs are illegitimate. With this in mind, we can say that *bad* or *corrupt politics* uses power to secure the special interests of constituencies that evolve for the sole purpose of concentrating wealth, promoting exclusivity, and restricting opportunity. In the geo-political situation of the Holy Land, bad politics has secured a place for the Israelis at the negotiating table in the "peace process" between the Palestinians and their occupiers. An "honest broker" would have no choice but to say that the Israelis and their American patrons do not belong in this place because they are invalid constituencies — and they are invalid because their needs are illegitimate. They can only be represented if their needs are legitimate. Having temporal power, especially in view of the fact that its historical exercise has been fraught with injustice and opportunism, is the worst excuse for legitimacy.

Overwhelmingly, the articles in the Covenant of Madinah are dedicated to meticulously identifying, by name, all of the important constituencies in the new social order of Madinah — the majority of whom were non-Muslims at the time the document became the law of the land. This was a giant leap forward for mankind as never before had a document been written that equally addressed the needs of all major constituencies, regardless of their geographic origin, status, race, color, or religion. In so far as managing the security of Madinah, all of their rights and responsibilities were delineated, none from amongst them would be supported in the commission of a crime, even by his own, and any unresolved disputes between them would be finally arbitrated by the Prophet (ﷺ) himself. This should be a lesson for all Islamic movements worldwide: that effective political reorganization coupled with institu-

tional conflict resolution mechanisms always precedes successful military campaigns.

Compare this to the colonization of the Americas over 400 years ago and the occupation of Palestine 60 years ago, where those who justified separating church from state also justified the means by the ends. In the first instance, neither was European Christianity invited to the New World, nor was European Jewry invited to the Holy Land. They both went as conquerors with the express purpose of confiscating the land and resources by ethnically cleansing the native populations and by subjugating others as slaves. Both also entered the territories they would ultimately occupy as minorities; however they achieved majority status not by virtue of showing the natives how to do things in a better way or by staying true to the principles they now claim to uphold, but by killing, humiliating, and demonizing them until there were virtually none left. In their guiding documents, neither one of them included any natives as constituents with the result that the indigenous peoples were never represented, and thus for all practical purposes they had no rights and could be treated like animals or worse.

Why were the native populations not allowed to be represented? First, because an open “democracy” would have yielded unfavorable results. If the outcome of a referendum were to be binding on all parties, as is the case today in separating the southern part of Sudan from the north, then all of the European colonists in the Americas and the Zionists in Palestine would have been expelled forthwith; after the briefest of experience with them, none of the natives would have wanted anything to do with them. However, democracy has only been shown to “work” when constituencies are opportunistically manipulated, gerrymandered, or simply not recognized; and when military force suffocates the voice of all those potential constituencies who would choose a more legitimate path to fulfill their aspirations.

Second, the natives in the Americas and the Palestinians in the Holy Land were not recognized because of racism. They were considered to be inferior human beings or not human at all, thus they deserved no rights whatsoever except to live for the purpose of

serving the master. Thus the founding “principles” of the colonialist projects in America and Palestine were both exclusive and exclusionary, in practice and in spirit. Racism at its core is a crisis of confidence in what a human being stands for. If he stands for truth and justice, he has no problem in putting his principles to the test, and he has no qualms about defending them with logic, reasoning, and justification. He does not need the force of numbers or weapons to achieve widespread acceptance; all he needs is a liberated conscience and a thinking public mind to go with it. On the other hand, if all he stands for is self interest, no matter how much he dresses it up with high-sounding words and pompous rhetoric, then there is no way he can rationalize that position in front of other thinking minds. He cannot stand up for his principles because on the merit of those so-called principles, he cannot win in a peaceful discourse among sincere human beings. So he resorts to fear tactics, threats, and ultimately military force to achieve his objectives — what the rest of us recognize as the law of the jungle.

This universal law dominates where the lack of confidence in a person’s own beliefs coupled with the sense of entitlement that comes with a supposition of being “born better” leads to the opposite reaction that exhibits itself as arrogance, hubris, and truculence. The contrast between confidence in Allah’s (ﷻ) words as exhibited by the Prophet (ﷺ) and the racism characteristic of modern-day imperialism, and its historical cousin colonialism, could not be more stark. At the peak of Islamic expansion during the *khilāfah* of the third successor to the Prophet (ﷺ), ‘Uthmān ibn ‘Affān (رضي الله عنه), when the Muslims had gone from Andalusia to the Indian subcontinent, no more than 10,000 people — mostly soldiers defending corrupt and tyrannical monarchies — lost their lives. On the other hand, since the Peace of Westphalia in 1648, when the nation-state model took root, something on the order of 360 million people have been literally exterminated, with entire tribes and peoples decimated leaving not even a chronicler to record their contributions for the posterity of succeeding human generations.

Those who made the secure commitment, that is, the *mu’mins*, whether the Muhājirūn from Makkah or the Anṣār of

Madinah, the new Muslims of Madinah, and all the other people of Madinah (that is, the non-Muslim signatories) “...henceforth constituted one *ummaḥ* distinctive from all other peoples,” according to Article 2 of the Covenant, establishing a new basis for relationship. This replaced tribal, local, and parochial loyalties with the quality of divine commitment as the basis for all social relations thus eliminating the potential for any discord on those bases. They were now part of a single community, that is, Islam gave them a new collective identity. Just as the first two articles of the Covenant established the brotherhood of the people of Madinah, referring to them as one *ummaḥ*, Articles 12–15 and 17–23 outlined the extended responsibilities of those given the duty to lead — the *mu’mins*. For instance, Article 12 stipulated

*...that the committed Muslims [mu’mins] shall not abandon an overburdened person among themselves except that they compensate him according to the accepted standard of living and provide for him, and offer him refuge; and that no committed Muslim shall take issue [pick a fight] with another committed Muslim just because he is a mawlá of another committed Muslim [who is junior to him].*

Thus, any *mu’min* in need became the responsibility of all the other *mu’mins*. Similarly, Article 15 stipulated that Allah (ﷻ) “...requires you to give sanctuary to the weakest amongst you; and that the committed Muslims are protectors of one another against all other men.” This spelled out clearly that those who were weak and poor were to be helped by everyone, and the *mu’mins* close to Allah’s Prophet (ﷺ) were to take the lead in setting the example. All *mu’mins* pledged to help each other through this Covenant.

### **Peace and Justice in Society**

Peace is only possible in society if there is justice. Prior to Islam, there was little or no justice in the Arabian Peninsula; the strong oppressed and exploited the weak. That is why women and slaves

were treated so badly. Through the Covenant, the Prophet (ﷺ) instituted justice as one of the basic principles of conduct in society. It was emphasized in several articles (3–15) to ensure everyone understood its importance. Similarly it was made incumbent in Article 13

*...that the committed Muslims — who are conscious of Allah's power presence — shall stand against anyone amongst their own who takes to aggression, or seeks an inclination toward aggression, or seeks infraction, assault, or corruption among the committed Muslims; and [if such were to occur], everyone's potential will unite against the offending party even though he may be one of their [own] sons.*

Even if the son of a *mu'min* perpetrated such a crime, he was not to be protected or spared. Justice and unity of the committed Muslims took precedence over blood and tribal loyalties. This is a fundamental principle of Islam; it was witnessed in the Battle of Badr when fathers faced their sons, and brothers confronted their brothers on opposite sides. The act of supporting your own even if they were getting ready to do something wrong no longer had any value; the Muslims' commitment was only to Islam, and as such they were prepared to kill their own blood relatives for their opposition to the Prophet (ﷺ) and their desire to eliminate his call to social justice, as embodied in the Islamic system — a call that was consistently repeated by all of Allah's Prophets (ﷺ) throughout the generations.

Compared to what they had faced in Makkah, this was a remarkable transformation in the situation of the Muslims. From a persecuted minority forced into exile by the Qurayshī chiefs, the Muslims were not only accepted but became the dominant power in Madinah and the Prophet (ﷺ) became the undisputed leader of the city-state. While Muslims were still a minority, it did not diminish the authority of the Prophet (ﷺ) in any way. All disputes were to be referred to him for resolution, that is, they would be decided in accordance with the laws prescribed by Allah (ﷻ).

One cannot help but ask why the Prophet (ﷺ) decided to institute the Covenant of Madinah and how he got the disparate groups in society to accept it. There was no written code of conduct, only the tribal law of vengeance and perpetual conflict, in society. The Prophet (ﷺ), however, had a clear vision and was fully aware of the mission entrusted to him by Allah (ﷻ). During the Second Pact of 'Aqabah, both the Prophet's (ﷺ) uncle al-'Abbās, who was not yet a Muslim but still supported his nephew, and As'ad ibn Zurārah (رضي الله عنه) from Yathrib, alluded to the fact that this was tantamount to taking on the powers of the East and the West. All those taking the pledge were asked to make sure they understood what it meant. It was not merely a question of accepting a few new precepts or indulging in some additional rituals; it was a struggle for the supremacy of Islam and this meant taking on the powers of Makkah as well as those outside Arabia, such as the Byzantine and Persian empires.<sup>50</sup> Those making the pledge understood clearly what the message conveyed to them by the Prophet (ﷺ) meant: Islam had to be made dominant in society. This was not possible merely by preaching. It required establishing Islam as the dominant paradigm in society; that is, creating the Islamic State. True, life in Madinah did not become trouble-free immediately, but the fact that there came into existence a mechanism whereby disputes could be resolved amicably between contending parties was a major step forward.

Even more important was Article 17 of the Covenant. It defines limits on the behavior of the committed Muslims,

*And that the truce and non-belligerency of the committed Muslims is indivisible: a mu'min does not break from the rest to enact a separate "truce" in matters pertaining to a struggle on a course to Allah, except in matters of reciprocal equivalency and mutual justice.*

This was meant to ensure that the Quraysh did not undermine the fledgling Islamic State in Madinah by entering into separate agreements with the people there. The Prophet's (ﷺ) reading of the sit-

uation was completely vindicated. Soon after arriving in Madinah, he was informed that the Quraysh had sent an emissary to ‘Abdullāh ibn Ubayy in an attempt to instigate trouble against the Muhājirūn. The Prophet (ﷺ) personally visited the latter and convinced him not to align himself with the Quraysh. But that alone was not enough to deter the Makkans from using “black-ops” to destabilize the nascent Islamic State in Madinah. The Makkan adversaries may have been *mushriks* but they clearly understood the significance of the Prophet’s (ﷺ) message and the challenge it posed to their vested interests. The situation sounds familiar, much like the present-day *mushriks* — the US, Britain, Israel and other exploiters of the world — who by the threat or use of force preclude any independent voices from emerging in the societies they oppress through their proxies or who deviously maneuver people and countries away from self-determination.

In order to prepare for the inevitable attack of the Quraysh, the Prophet (ﷺ) established a clear basis on which the Muslims would conduct their affairs: no separate peace without the approval of the other parties to the Covenant would be permitted. This ensured that the Quraysh would not be able to divide the people of Madinah. One of the first requirements of successful defense is to create internal cohesion. In Madinah, the Muhājir-Anṣārī divide as well as the *munāfiqs* from within and the Yahūd could all have been venues of exploitation unless steps were taken to bind the society to specific rules. Even though the Jews agreed to become part of the Covenant, they violated their agreement at the first available opportunity. Each of the three tribes violated their Covenant obligations and tried to cause harm to the Muslims. Each one was dealt with on the basis of its level of treachery.

There were also other provisions in the Covenant that specifically referred to dealings (or non-dealings) with the Quraysh. These were meant to ensure that even the *mushriks* of Madinah could not strike a separate deal with the Quraysh since the latter were the enemies of Muslims. Articles 20, 43, and 44 specified the obligations of the *mushriks* in Madinah. For instance, “...no *mushrik* shall be allowed to place under his protection against the interest of a



*mu'min, any wealth or person belonging to the Quraysh*" (Article 20), while Article 43 prohibited giving any protection to the Quraysh or their allies. Similarly, all parties to the Covenant were bound by the agreement to assist "...one another against whoever attacks Yathrib" (Article 44).

While recognizing the rights of all — Muslims as well as non-Muslims — within the city-state, the Covenant also placed certain obligations upon them. This was a new phenomenon for the Arabians but it bound them to a certain set of rules required for successfully conducting the business of state. One such rule was that individuals or groups would not be permitted to enter into separate arrangements with the enemies of the state. Today, this may be standard practice but it was not practiced during the time of the Prophet (ﷺ) when people had little conception of the existence of a state, much less any understanding of how it functioned. Similarly, much like the behavior of most nation-states today, people only looked after their immediate interests; they had little appreciation of any obligations toward others. The Covenant established new rules that may initially have been difficult to comprehend fully but their utility soon became apparent when the benefits began to accrue to the agreeing parties. Articles 12 and 15 in particular emphasized the importance of helping those who were destitute. It was stated as an obligation to assist those in need.

Another important feature of the Covenant was that the Jews were recognized as a distinct scriptural community and given equal status with the Muslims. Article 16 stipulated, "*And that whoever from the Jews merges with us shall be assisted and acclaimed; and none [of them] shall be offended and beleaguered.*" A more equitable arrangement could not be envisioned; even people of scripture, not unlike their scriptureless Arabian allies, were committed to tribal and clan loyalties but the Covenant eliminated such differences by raising the signatories above these narrow considerations. A number of other articles specified the rights of the Jews who were allied to the indigenous Arabian tribes. In case of war, each group — Muslims and Jews — were required to spend their own resources in order to equip themselves for battle. Article 37 was even clearer, stating,

*And that the Jews shall bear their own expenses as will the Muslims. And that between them is [a pledge of] mutual assistance against whomever wages war on the signatories of this document; and that their relationship shall be one of mutual advice, counsel, and virtue rather than harm and aggression. However, no man is to be held accountable for a crime committed by his ally; assistance is due to the party suffering oppression [not the one perpetrating it]”.*

Even the clients of the Yahūd were granted these rights. Nothing could be fairer.

Why was the Prophet (ﷺ) so keen to confer upon the Jews the same status as the Muslims, one that was even above the non-Muslim Arabians? He clearly saw these claimants to previous scripture as monotheists — that is, those who commit to the authority/divinity of the One God — and therefore, placed them on par with the new people of scripture, the Muslims. After all, the relationship between the Muhājirūn and the Anṣār was based not on blood ties but on the basis of commitment to Allah (ﷻ); the same principle applied here even though the Jews had not yet acquiesced to the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ). He hoped that once they understood the message he had brought, they, as monotheists, would see, like the Christian al-Najāshī of Abyssinia, that the Qur’an was only confirming and corroborating the truth they had already come to accept through the agency of Mūsā and the Prophets (ﷺ) who came after him. While they recognized the truth, their jealousy got the better of them. One of their rabbis, ‘Abdullāh ibn Salām (رضي الله عنه) from Banū Qaynuqā’, who embraced Islam, told the Prophet (ﷺ) that his people and their leaders knew the truth of his prophethood but refused to accept it.<sup>51</sup> In several Qura’nic āyāt, Allah (ﷻ) tells the Prophet (ﷺ) to ask the Jews what their own book, the Torah, says about the advent of the last prophet and whether he embodies the qualities outlined therein (7:157, 61:07).

In addition to the Covenant, the three major Jewish tribes also later entered into separate agreements with the Prophet (ﷺ). Their

principal obligation was not to enter into any independent alliance with the Quraysh against the people of Madinah. The leaders of the Jewish tribes begrudgingly accepted this as they were now coming to resent the Muslims' dominant role in Madinah, which undermined the strong and divisive Yahūdī influence prior to the arrival of the Prophet (ﷺ). The Jews were not asked to join the Muslims in any battle against the Makkan *mushriks*; their only obligation was to remain neutral. Yet they were not prepared to adhere even to this reasonable demand. After all, they too were residents of Madinah and this naturally entailed certain obligations toward the city's safety and security, yet they violated the Covenant at the first opportunity. Banū Qurayẓah even conspired with the confederates who had laid a month-long siege on Madinah in the 5th year of the Hijrah.<sup>52</sup> It was the Prophet's (ﷺ) leadership that steeled the Muslims' resolve so that they would not lose hope, thereby saving the city from certain ruination during the Battle of al-Aḥzāb (33:9–27).

We need not detain ourselves here with the issue of how the Yahūd should have been dealt with following their treacherous behavior. Other writers have treated this issue in great detail, providing different perspectives on it.<sup>53</sup> Our primary concern here is with the Covenant of Madinah that was in written form and created the basis for agreement between the different groups residing in Madinah and its environs. It was this document that transformed Madinah from a hamlet in the bush to a city-state and made it into an abode of peace.

### On the Treachery of the Yahūd

Peace is a by-product not of the absence of conflict, but of the presence of justice. It is probably impossible to measure the amount of peace in a society; however, issues of justice can be measured and adjudicated. Most of us are familiar with these mechanisms in the form of courts, the execution of contracts, public hearings, etc. A high level of social justice is indicative of how much at peace the society is. In analyzing the Covenant of Madinah, many Muslims tend to focus on its pluralistic qualities of tolerance, mutual respect,

joint obedience to Allah (ﷻ), supporting the weak regardless of which constituency they come from, and sharing in the costs of security. However, in as much as they champion these virtues as being reflective of the essence of Islam — especially when the Muslims are portrayed as being uncooperative, irrational, contemptuous, stubborn, and irascible — they simultaneously tend to shun with almost the same level of passion the threads of implied justice interwoven throughout the articles of the document, especially where it concerns the treatment of the Yahūd.

Mercy definitely tempers justice; and while a more merciful man never walked on the face of the earth, the Prophet (ﷺ) was still required to be a man of principle and purpose. Where mercy could have substituted for punishment, he would have certainly opted for it, because he was sent as a mercy for all the worlds. At the same time, it could be said that in those instances where he ordered punishment, it was a mercy for those who received it as a compensation for their crimes — when the full spectrum of life and afterlife is taken into account. And it was a mercy for the others around, who were educated by the example of the Prophet (ﷺ), that were the punishment for treachery to be countermanded with clemency, it would cause the rest of the peaceful justice-oriented society to endure an unsettled and unstable situation in which it would constantly have to watch out for the treacherous ones within. The perfect example of the Prophet (ﷺ) showed us how to balance the imperatives of justice with the tenderness of mercy; indeed he said about himself,

*I am the prophet of mercy, and the prophet [who offers the people the opportunity] of repentance, and the prophet of heroic [war] epics.<sup>54</sup>*

The Yahūd of Madinah were the first to test the Prophet's (ﷺ) resolve, determination, and decisiveness. Their historical character of persecuting and ridiculing their prophets and thumbing their noses at the guidance they brought from Allah (ﷻ), which exhibits itself today as Zionism and Israelism, goes all the way back to the

time of Prophet Jacob (عليه السلام). Some background on Banū al-Naḍīr has already been given. They were ultimately expelled from Madinah for a series of provocations, betraying their oath and fidelity to the Prophet (ﷺ) and the other signatories to the Covenant. The first of these was Ka'b ibn al-Ashraf's treasonous rapprochement with the Quraysh — a direct violation of Articles 13, 20, and 43 — for which he paid with his life. Article 43 states, *"And that neither the Quraysh nor any of its supporters shall be offered [any] assistance or aid."*

The second major affront, which escalated into an attempt on the life of the Prophet (ﷺ) himself, is related to an incident involving 'Amr ibn Umayyah al-Ḍamrī (رضي الله عنه) who was captured and then released in Makkah. On his way back to Madinah, he came across two individuals from the Banū 'Āmir tribe, which had earlier taken him captive, but these two were not the ones who were guilty of making him a prisoner for ransom. Collective punishment was a prevalent form of vengeance in *jāhiliyyah*, and all the Arabian tribes were very used to it. Even the early Muslims, who had not been long out of *jāhiliyyah*, were not completely attuned to the Islamic ethic of restraint and proportionality. They were all a work in progress who were learning as they made mistakes, which were corrected from on high by the revelation coming to the Prophet (ﷺ). And so 'Amr killed both of these innocents in cold blood.

As the two killed persons were not guilty of any crime against 'Amr, the Prophet (ﷺ) determined that the crime was murder, and under the terms of the Covenant, the bereaved families were entitled to financial compensation from the Muslims (Article 21). But the Islamic public treasury did not have enough funds to adequately compensate the relatives of the two who were murdered. Hence the Prophet (ﷺ) was obliged to solicit financial assistance from Banū al-Naḍīr, as Articles 24, 37, and 38 of the Covenant make clear. They asked the Prophet (ﷺ) to wait outside the wall of one of their fortified strongholds on the outskirts of Madinah while they deliberated on the matter. As he was waiting on their decision, Allah (ﷻ) informed the Prophet (ﷺ) that members of Banū al-Naḍīr were hatching a plot to kill him by dropping a heavy rock on his head from the top of the wall. And so not only had Banū

al-Naḍīr entered into a political and military understanding with the Quraysh, and not only had they reached an agreement with ‘Abdullāh ibn Ubayy ibn Sallūl who promised them that he would authorize 2,000 fighters to defend them, they now tried to kill the head of the Islamic State, who was himself a prophet. Not being the first time this happened, their treacherous historical character was once again put on display,

**Certainly, Allah has heard the annunciation of those who said, “Verily, Allah is poor while we are rich.” We will register their affirmation, and their unjustified murder of prophets; and We will say, “Taste the torment of the flame. This is due to what your hands have obliged.” Indeed, Allah does not mistreat human subjects (3:181–182).**

**And so, [We punished them] for the breaking of their pledge, and their refusal to acknowledge Allah’s messages, and their slaying of prophets against all right, and their boast, “Our hearts are already full of knowledge,” rather Allah has sealed their hearts in result of their denial of the truth, and [now] they believe in but few things... (4:155).**

The Prophet (ﷺ) immediately went back to Madinah, assembled a fighting force, and came back to lay siege on the fortifications of Banū al-Naḍīr. When the Muslims surrounded these duplicitous Yahūdīs militarily, they found themselves all alone as those who had pledged to come to their aid — the *mushriks* of Makkah and the *munāfiqs* of Madinah — went back on their word. Seeing no other way out of their predicament, they tried to pay their way out, showcasing another one of their loathsome characteristics. But the Prophet (ﷺ) did not accept their offer; instead, he permitted them to leave with their lives and only one camel per three families to load as much as they could of their possessions on it. All the rest of what they possessed had to be left behind as a

compensation for their deceit and perfidy. The majority of them resettled in Khaybar, and the balance went back to Palestine.

The story of Banū Qurayẓah and their unfaithfulness during the Battle of al-Aḥzāb is well known and does not need to be retold in great detail here. Suffice it to say that the men of the tribe were executed and the women and children were banished after an arbitrator whom they had chosen — Sa'd ibn Mu'adh — had pronounced judgment against them because they had violated the Covenant they had pledged to honor. In his excellent book *Islam and the Problem of Israel*, Dr. Ismā'il al-Fārūqī sums up the Madinan Jewish engagement with the Prophet (ﷺ) in relation to the Covenant,

The Prophet sought no quarrel with them. The Covenant of Madinah invoked God as its Guarantor, and this was confirmed in revelation. The Covenant was already a working constitution. Islam had previously voiced all its critique of Judaism as religion and culture, and most of the Jews had not converted to Islam. For over two years, these Jews had practiced their faith in freedom and dignity. Their political behavior, however, was a different and very grave matter. That is why the judgments pronounced against them varied proportionately to the gravity of the danger to which their plotting exposed the Islamic polity: banishment with permission to carry their wealth away in the first case [Banū Qaynuqā']; in the second, banishment without such permission [Banū al-Naḍīr]; in the third, execution of the able-bodied males convicted of high treason [Banū Qurayẓah]. The judgments had *ipso facto* nothing to do with Judaism, the religion. Others, Muslim and non-Muslim, have been guilty of similar crimes and received the same judgment. That is also why, following the death of the Prophet, when the Jews who were banished from Madinah and settled in the North came once again under Islamic dominion, the precepts of the Covenant of Madinah were reapplied as if nothing had happened before.<sup>55</sup>

The last word in this whole affair between the Jews of Madinah and the Muslim followers of the Prophet (ﷺ) belongs to Allah (ﷻ),

Verily, the vilest creatures in the sight of Allah are those who are bent on denying the truth and therefore do not make a secure commitment [to Allah]. As for those with whom you have made a covenant, and who thereupon break their covenant on every occasion, not being conscious [of Allah's corrective justice], if you find them at war [with you], make of them a fearsome example for those who follow them, so that they might take it to heart. Or, if you have reason to fear treachery from people [with whom you have made a covenant], cast it back at them so as to be on equal footing: for, verily, Allah does not love the treacherous!

And let them not think — those who are bent on denying the truth — that they shall escape [Allah]; behold, they can never frustrate [His purpose]. Hence, make ready against them whatever force and war mounts you are able to muster, so that you might deter thereby the enemies of Allah, who are your enemies as well, and others besides them of whom you may be unaware, [but] of whom Allah is aware; and whatever you may expend in Allah's cause shall be repaid to you in full, and you shall not be wronged (8:55–60).

### Madinah as a Ḥaram (Sanctuary of Peace)

Yathrib, soon to be renamed Madīnah al-Nabī (the Prophet's (ﷺ) City), was declared a sanctuary “for the parties of this Covenant.” This bound all those agreeing to the Covenant to maintain peace and harmony in society and to safeguard it from outside aggression. The concept of *ḥarām* (the holy sanctuary where fighting is forbidden) is rooted in Islam and is based on the guidance of the Qur'an. Just as the Ḥaram of Makkah was a safe sanctuary and every kind of warfare, altercation, or lewd conduct was and is prohibited within its



boundaries (2:197), so, too, was Madinah declared a *ḥarām*. The immigrants from Makkah were already familiar with this concept since they observed peace within the boundaries of the Ḥaram in Makkah; for the people of Madinah, however, this was a new, but welcome, practice — one they readily accepted since it ensured safety and security in their city as well. An additional advantage was that it established the spiritual and political boundaries of Madinah.

Even though he enjoyed undisputed power and authority, the Prophet (ﷺ) neither declared himself king nor a chief of the Quraysh or the Muslims, according to the customs of the time. The only privilege, if it could be called that, he allowed himself was that in case of a dispute between different groups or individuals, he would be the ultimate judge to resolve the matter according to Allah's (ﷻ) divine Writ. This was based on his authority as the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ). Similarly, in the matter of the security of the city-state, that is, in the declaration of war, his was the final say and had to be accepted by all. Naturally, there had to be someone in authority to decide on these matters. Such a decision and the responsibility of its consequences would have to be referred to the head of state, and not to a council of tribal chiefs; and as the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) he assumed responsibility for this vital function.

But as we know from the manner of his conduct, he did not impose his will on others. Prior to the Battle of Uḥud, for instance, while his preference was to defend the city from within, the majority wanted to fight out in the open on a common battlefield. He deferred to their decision. One would be hard pressed to find another example of this kind of acceptance of others' opinions, one moreover that would turn out to be detrimental to the Muslims. But the Prophet (ﷺ) did not reprimand those who disagreed with him. In the Battle of Uḥud, the Muslims initially overwhelmed the enemy forces but their ultimate defeat came at the hands of the archers who, upon leaving their strategic position, violated the Prophet's (ﷺ) command, forcing the Muslim infantry to fight on two fronts. The Prophet (ﷺ) used the defeat as an opportunity to make them understand that the information and command coming from the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) was more important than any other consideration.<sup>56</sup>

In the contemporary era, the idea of a state with a constitution does not appear out of the ordinary; it is considered the norm. This was not the case at the time of the Prophet (ﷺ). People were not familiar with such concepts as a state and constitution; they did not adhere to formal rules established through a written charter administered by a central authority. The consent of the governed was even more unfamiliar; people adhered to tribal customs and had little or no respect for the rights of others. In fact, attacking and confiscating others' possessions by force, including their women and children, was common. True, on the peripheries of Arabia there were several kingdoms but they too did not care for the rights of their people; the word of the king, often quite arbitrary, was the law. Dissenters were ruthlessly suppressed or eliminated. In Madinah, the Prophet (ﷺ) enjoyed sufficient authority and power to have had his will imposed on his constituents but he did not do so. Instead, the policies he instituted secured the willing consent of everyone in Madinah, including those who were not Muslims.

### **Review of Some Contemporary Constitutions**

In the 14 centuries since the time of the Prophet (ﷺ), ideas of state, authority, lawmaking, and other instruments of governance have become well-known and established. A quick glance at the constitutions of some modern states would provide a better understanding of how they compare with the Covenant of Madinah promulgated by the Prophet (ﷺ) 1,400 years ago. Almost every country in the world today has a constitution or some kind of governing document. This extends even to organizations; they usually draw up a charter that defines how their activities will be managed in order to achieve a set of objectives. Such a document, formulated and agreed to by the representatives of the people or those possessing authority among them, is supposed to regulate relations in society and determine areas of responsibility for various branches of the establishment: executive, judiciary, and the legislature. It normally spells out the division of power and what limits are imposed on its use.

Despite its importance, some countries even today do not have a written constitution and rely instead on a number of statutes. Britain, New Zealand, Canada, and Israel fall into this category. None of them has a written constitution although they have various other instruments that govern rules and conduct in society. The British constitution is based on the Magna Carta (The Great Charter) of 1215CE and such laws as may be passed by parliament or the rulings given by judges (also known as *common law*).<sup>57</sup> The Magna Carta was only enforced for a few months before it was violated by the king; it was subsequently reissued with revisions three times in 1216, 1217, and 1225, but nearly all of its provisions were reversed by new laws and the bulk of it is ineffectual today. Like Britain, Canada too does not have a written constitution. Until 1982, laws passed by Canada's parliament were ratified by Britain and became law only when they received formal assent from the Queen or her representative in Canada, the governor-general. In April 1982, Canada "repatriated" its constitution and established the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. This document outlines freedom of religion and the basic rights of the individual although the British monarchy remains Canada's head of state.

The American Constitution is often referred to as a model for other societies. The US Declaration of Independence of July 4, 1776, drawn up by the representatives of 13 states that formed the new union, states inter alia, "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness."<sup>58</sup> These are fine words but the reality was very different for many people under their jurisdiction. The very people who talked about "all men being created equal" and asserted "they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights," did not extend such rights to the (black) slaves of African origin, women, or the landless peasants, not to mention the Native Americans. Women had to struggle to get suffrage that they finally won only in the 1920s. African Americans had no liberty by virtue of being slaves and had to struggle even longer to end segregation. This did not materialize until 1964 and not before mil-

lions of blacks marched in the streets of US cities suffering such barbaric practices as having dogs unleashed against them, being hosed with water cannons, or being shelled by tear gas cannisters; in many instances, they were either beaten or shot to death by the predominantly white police. Despite a “legal” end to segregation laws and practices, discrimination has not disappeared; racism is deeply entrenched in the American society and psyche. One only has to consider the large number of blacks, out of proportion with their population, incarcerated in US prisons; for the same crime, a black person is twice or three times more likely to end up in prison than a white person.

Finally, the Native Americans were always considered outsiders on their own land; they were willfully exterminated by the dominant racists of European origin. Today, what is left of them, survives on “reservations;” much of America’s nuclear testing, underground or otherwise, has taken place close to areas inhabited by descendants of Native Americans, leading to incurable health issues to which the state has turned a blind eye. This is the longest running genocide in modern history — over 500 years — and continues to this day. But then again, constitutions formulated upon the sovereignty of man rather than the authority of Allah (ﷻ) prefer slogans over just solutions and platitudes over permanent peace.

Closer to the heartland of Islam, another entity, the Zionist State of Israel is touted as a “model democracy” in a sea of dictatorships in the Muslim East. While the charge against Middle Eastern tyrannies is valid, it is neither the fault of Islam nor that of Muslims. These tyrannies exist precisely because the Islam-hating Western governments back their Middle Eastern proxies with military, economic, political, and diplomatic support. The masses would rather have Islamic governments that truly reflect their aspirations. Similarly, Islam is opposed to governments imposed on the people; there is absolutely no room for dictatorship in Islam although Muslims have had more than their share of dictators throughout history and have paid a heavy price for resisting them. But let us examine the claims of the “only democracy” in the

Muslim East a little closer. Two points would suffice: first, the benefits of democracy do not extend to non-Jews within society. They are not only treated as second-class citizens (in reality fourth class, if one were to take into account the deep racial and religious divisions existing in the Zionist State) but also they have no access to certain lands, as they are reserved exclusively for Jews. This means that the Jewish State is a *demographic* state, not a *democratic* one, meaning that a Jewish majority must always be maintained. This has generally been accomplished by what they characterize as a “transfer” of the historical inhabitants — the Palestinians. Second, this “democratic” utopia has no defined borders, the only state of its kind in the world. It has pursued an aggressive policy of expansionism not only in Palestine but also in neighboring states, expelling the indigenous population through a continuing campaign of terror and cold-blooded murder. It is also worth mentioning that the Zionist State came into existence in 1948; that is, it is a creation of 20th-century colonialism. In this age of so-called enlightenment and modernity, such blatant racism and hypocrisy far surpasses the excesses of many primitive societies.

Before we leave this subject, it would be worthwhile to consider the practices of the present-day rulers of the Arabian Peninsula, the place where Allah’s last and final Messenger (ﷺ) was born and where the first Islamic State was established. The land referred to by the noble Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) as the Arabian Peninsula is today called “Saudi Arabia,” as if it is a piece of real estate owned by the family of Saud. This Arabian family has declared itself a monarchy even though the blessed Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) never declared himself king despite being the last and final Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) and despite the fact that there were prophet-kings before him such as Yūsuf, Dāwūd, and Sulaymān (عليه السلام). Kingship was not unknown in Madinah or indeed elsewhere in the Peninsula. When the Prophet (ﷺ) migrated to Madinah, plans were afoot to declare ‘Abdullāh ibn Ubayy ibn Sallūl the king of all the tribes of Madinah, but these had to be shelved with the arrival of the Prophet (ﷺ). There were also monarchs and kings in the lands surrounding the Arabian Peninsula.

The land the Prophet (ﷺ) graced with his presence is today referred to as the “Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.” What a travesty. Did Allah’s Messenger (ﷺ) ever characterize the area as “Muhammadi Arabia?” Instead of a representative government obeying the laws of Allah (ﷻ), there is a self-imposed monarchy answerable to no one except perhaps their American and Israeli masters. In March 1992, then ruler King Fahd ibn ‘Abd al-‘Azīz “granted” a constitution, containing 87 articles, to the kingdom. Article 1 states “The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is a sovereign Arab Islamic state with Islam as its religion; God’s Book and the Sunnah of His Prophet, God’s prayers and peace be upon him, are its constitution...”

Under Chapter 2, titled “Monarchy,” Article 5 outlines the system of government, who will rule, and how succession will take place. It says that,

- a. the system of government in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is that of a monarchy.
- b. rule passes to the sons of the founding king, ‘Abd al-‘Azīz ibn ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Fayṣal Āl Sa‘ūd, and to their children’s children. The most upright among them is to receive allegiance in accordance with the principles of the Holy Koran and the Tradition of the Venerable Prophet.
- c. the king chooses the heir apparent and relieves him of his (other) duties by Royal order.
- d. the heir apparent is to devote his time to his duties as an heir apparent and to whatever missions the king entrusts him with.
- e. the heir apparent takes over the powers of the king on the latter’s death until the oath of allegiance has been carried out.<sup>59</sup>

If “God’s Book and the Sunnah of His Prophet, God’s prayers and peace be upon him, are its constitution...” why is it called a kingdom and the form of government a monarchy? The Prophet (ﷺ) did not establish a monarchy in Madinah although he was the prince of the whole of Arabia through his noble family lineage and his upright character. He insisted on calling himself the Servant and Messenger of Allah (ﷻ). The Prophet (ﷺ) led a simple life, often going without food for days. The rapacious extravagance of the

House of Saud would put even the Pharaohs to shame. How can the present-day rulers of Arabia claim to be following “God’s Book” and “the Sunnah of His Prophet?” What *āyah* provides justification for monarchy as a form of Islamic government? *Al-khilāfah al-rāshidah* never claimed the title of kings or monarchs either. Islamic scholars are unanimous on the point that the conversion of *khilāfah* into *mulukīyah* subverted the Islamic system of governance. The House of Saud is clearly not following the Sunnah of the Prophet of Allah (ﷺ) by declaring their state a kingdom with a monarch to rule over the people. Further, the Saudi practice of rule passing “to the sons of the founding king, ‘Abd al-‘Azīz ibn ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Fayṣal Āl Sa‘ūd, and to their children’s children,” has no sanction in Islam. This has more to do with tribal customs rather than Islamic principles or practices. No such article exists in the Covenant of Madinah nor did the noble Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) insist on one.

Instead, the Covenant of Madinah is a remarkable document full of clarity, fairness, and inclusiveness. It gives the same rights to all people regardless of their religion despite Islam being a universal *dīn* and the Islamic State being an ideological fact of life. The Covenant emphasizes common citizenship based on people’s voluntary adherence to it. In it, no reference to favoritism or discrimination on the basis of race, color, tribe, class, or religion can be found, something sadly lacking in many societies even today. It was due to the principled adherence to fairness and equity that the signing parties were so committed to the Islamic State and the leadership and authority of the noble Messenger of Allah (ﷺ). True, not everyone followed the terms of the Covenant with sincerity but there are dishonest and selfish people in every society. The noble Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) gave them an opportunity to accept a Covenant that respected everyone regardless of ethnicity, race, or religion. It was for them to accept or reject. Those, like the Yahūd, who betrayed it, were then dealt with according to the criteria revealed by Allah (ﷻ) to His Messenger (ﷺ), and not based on discrimination or hatred of any particular group.

The Covenant of Madinah stands out as a remarkable document, even today. It was the first to institutionalize peace and har-

mony in the conflict-ridden society of Arabia. It was instrumental in creating internal cohesion and harmony in Madinah so that the looming threat from the Quraysh that would not be long in coming could be managed. Beyond Madinah, its immediate impact was felt by facilitating cooperative relations with the tribes residing to the west and straddling the trade routes to Syria. It is to this aspect that we will turn our attention in the next chapter.

### Notes and References

- 1 Qur'an, 17:80.
- 2 There are many versions of this *du'ā'*, where the wording varies slightly in each narration; however the intended meaning is concordant across all the versions. In all the variations, one of which is given below, the narrator is the same — Anas ibn Mālik (رضي الله عنه) — whereas those who recorded them are numerous, including al-Bukhārī, Muslim, and al-Suyūṭī.

اللهم إني أعوذ بك من الهم والحزن . والعجز والكسل . والجبن والبخل . وضع الدين . وغلبة الرجال

- 3 Abū al-A'lā Mawdūdī, *Tafheem ul-Qur'an*, Volume 2. (Lahore, Pakistan: Maktaba-e Ta'meer-e Insaniyyat, 1974), p. 638 (narrated by 'Uthmān ibn 'Affān – رضي الله عنه).

إن الله يزع بالسلطان ما لا يزع بالقرآن

- 4 Zafar Bangash (editor), *In Pursuit of the Power of Islam: Major Writings of Kalim Siddiqui*. (London, UK: The Open Press, 1996), p. 293.
- 5 Shibli Naumani, *Seeratun Nabi*, Volume 1 (Urdu). (Lahore, Pakistan: Nashiran-e Qur'an Limited, undated), pp. 280–82.

An expanded version of the two-volume original, cited above, was published in 1975 by Deeni Kutubkhana in Lahore, Pakistan. Syed Sulaiman Nadwi added numerous references to this revised, expanded six-volume edition.

- 6 Ibid., p. 186.
- 7 Abū Bakr Muḥammad ibn Ishāq ibn Yasār and Abū Muḥammad 'Abd al-Malik ibn Hishām, *Seeratun Nabi*, Volume 1, (rendition of Muḥammad ibn Ishāq's original work, Urdu). (Lahore, Pakistan: Idara-e Islamiyyat, 1989), pp. 340–41;



Shibli Naumani, *Seeratun Nabi*, Volume 1, pp. 290–91.

- 8 **al-ladhīna āmanū** – those who are securely committed to Allah (ﷻ); the first among equals in an Islamic society.
- 9 Dr. Muḥammad Ḥamīdullāh, *Rasool-e Akram ki Siyasi Zindagi (Urdu)*. (Karachi, Pakistan: Darul Asha‘at, 2003), p. 251.
- 10 Naseer Ahmed Nasir, *Payghambar-e Azam wa Akhir (Urdu)*. (Lahore, Pakistan: Feroze Sons, undated), pp. 389–90;  
  
Saifur Rahman al-Mubarakpuri, *Al-Raḥīq al-Makhtūm (Urdu)*. (Lahore, Pakistan: Al-Maktabah al-Salafiyyah, 1999), pp. 248–49.
- 11 Shibli Naumani and Syed Sulaiman Nadwi, *Seeratun Nabi*, Volumes 1–2. (Lahore, Pakistan: Al-Faisal Nashiran wa Tajiran, 2005), p. 175;  
  
Shibli Naumani, *Seeratun Nabi*, Volume 1, p. 262 (originally cited in *Wafā’ al-Wafā bi-Akḥbār Dār al-Muṣṭafā*, Volume 1, by Nūr al-Dīn ‘Alī ibn ‘Abdillāh al-Samḥūdī, pp. 116–52, which also contains further details about the origins of the Anṣār).
- 12 Ibn Ishāq and Ibn Hishām, *Seeratun Nabi*, Volume 1, p. 287.
- 13 Ibid., p. 284.
- 14 Ibid., pp. 293–96.
- 15 Ibid., pp. 354–55.

Abū Ja‘far ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Tārikh al-Umam wa-al-Mulūk (popularly known as Tareekh-e Tabari)*, Volume 1 (Urdu). (Karachi, Pakistan: Nafees Academy, 1987), pp. 226–27;

Abū al-A‘lā Mawdūdī, *Tafheem ul-Qur’an*, Volume 2. (Lahore, Pakistan: Idara Tarjumanul Qur’an, 1994), pp. 121–22, p. 310 (Volume 3), pp. 508–22 (Volume 5), and *tafsīr* of *Sūrah al-Munāfiqūn*.

- 16 Originally cited by Abū al-Faraj al-Iṣfahānī in his book *Kitāb al-Aghānī* (Volume 16, p. 94) and by al-Balādhurī in his book *Futūḥ al-Buldān*, and then quoted by

Abū al-A‘lā Mawdūdī, *Tafheem ul-Qur’an*, Volume 5. (Lahore, Pakistan: Idara Tarjumanul Qur’an, 1994), p. 371;

- ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Suhaylī, *Rawḍ al-Anf, Volume 2 (Urdu)*. (Lahore, Pakistan: Ziaul Qur’an Publications, 2005), pp. 484–85.
- 17 Roger Garaudy, *The Case of Israel: A Study of Political Zionism*. (London, UK: Shorouk International, 1983), pp. 33–35.
- 18 Solomon Grayzel, *A History of the Jews*. (New York, New York: New American Library, 1968), pp. 225–27.
- 19 Muḥammad Ḥusayn Haykal (Dr. Ismā‘īl Rājī al-Fārūqī, translator), *The Life of Muhammad* (ﷺ). (Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia: Islamic Book Trust, 1993), pp. 150–55.
- 20 Dr. Muḥammad Ḥamīdullāh, *Ahd-e Nabawi main Nizam-e Hukumrani, Volume 1, 2nd edition*. (Hyderabad (Daccan), India: Maktaba Ibrahimiyya, undated), pp. 102–11.
- 21 R.A. Nicholson, *A Literary History of the Arabs*. (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1962), p. 173.
- 22 W. Montgomery Watt, *Muhammad at Medina, 4th edition*. (Karachi, Pakistan: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 221;
- J.J. Saunders, *A History of Medieval Islam*. (London, UK: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1965), p. 26.
- 23 Dr. Muḥammad Ḥamīdullāh (Khalid Pervez, translator), *Le Prophete de l’Islam (Payghambar-e Islam: Urdu translation from French)*. (Multan, Pakistan: Beacon House, 2005), p. 205, (originally cited in *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, Book 96, Chapter 16, No. 18).
- 24 Haykal, *The Life of Muhammad* (ﷺ), p. 156;
- Ḥamīdullāh, *Le Prophete de l’Islam*, p. 202.
- 25 Mazhar ul-Haq, *Principles of Political Science*. (Lahore, Pakistan: Bookland Publishers, 1975), p. 37.
- For a definition and discussion of the concept of *state*, see the chapter by the same name, pp. 35–40.
- 26 The English Language Institute of America, *The Living Webster Encyclopedic Dictionary of the English Language*. (Chicago, Illinois: The English Language Institute of America, 1977), p. 953.

- 27 Ṭāhā Ḥusayn, *‘Alī wa-Banūh*. (Cairo, Egypt: Dār al-‘Ilm li-al-Malāyīn, 1991).
- 28 G.N. Jalbani, *Teachings of Shah Waliyullah of Delhi, 3rd edition*. (Lahore, Pakistan: Ashraf Publishers, 1979), pp. 146–47.
- 29 Zafar Bangash (editor), *In Pursuit of the Power of Islam*, p. 293.
- 30 Muḥammad Salīm al-‘Awwā, *On the Political System of the Islamic State*. (Indianapolis, Indiana: American Trust Publications, 1980), p. 1, (originally cited by Muḥammad Ṭāhā Badawī in *Mudhakkirāt fi ‘Ilm al-Siyāsah*, p. 104).
- 31 **mu’mins** and **muslims** of Quraysh – this indicates the seasoned or well-established Muslims (*mu’mins*), those who would be carrying the higher responsibilities such as rule and decision making; and the newly initiated Muslims from the Quraysh. The Prophet (ﷺ) is basically identifying the two components of the Muhājirūn.
- 32 **people of Yathrib** – this refers to the Anṣār, the Jewish tribes of Madinah, and all the residents of Madinah who had not yet become Muslims.
- 33 Here, the Prophet (ﷺ) is acknowledging the fact that interdependent relationships already exist, and taking advantage of this dynamic, he in a non-discriminatory way is making each constituency responsible for its own members. Note that even though the constituency is semi-autonomous the last portion of the article ensures that no constituency will follow its own social law, its own pattern of political representation, or its own security arrangements. Each constituency is required internally to take care of its own but in the larger context is required to form a unit with the other constituencies in so far as the defense of the city is concerned.
- 34 **overburdened person** – one who cannot make ends meet.
- 35 **mawlá** – a second-class citizen within the *jāhili* class structure of society, which was acknowledged by the Prophet (ﷺ) at the time this document was enacted, but it is clear from the general tone of the articles that the Prophet’s (ﷺ) intent was to immediately initiate a process of behavioral modification that would lead to a society devoid of the typical breakdown of classes along lines of influence and wealth. And thus henceforth, those who considered themselves and were considered by others to be second-class would be given the self-confidence to demand the rights they deserved, while those who were prone to put themselves in the first-class category would be taught that the exercise of power is conditional on the promotion of social justice and the equilibration of social status.

- 36 The junior status could either refer to the other Muslim or the *mawlā*.
- 37 **kāfir** – one who is part of an organized combatant opposition to Allah (ﷻ) and His Messenger (ﷺ) — for example, the Quraysh of Makkah.
- 38 Here again, the existing class structure is recognized (but not approved) as a starting point that has to be ultimately restructured by a set of new behaviors that seek to reduce the distance between (*jāhili*) classes to a point where such distinctions are irrelevant; in the case of this article in the document, the representation of the entire community of Muslims by an individual Muslim is considered to be legitimate and binding on the whole, regardless of his class status in the soon-to-be vanishing *jāhili* societal setup.
- 39 **reciprocal equivalency** – the terms of the individual agreement do not harm, violate, or diminish the security and well-being of all the other Muslims and the standards of justice.
- 40 This article rewards those who made a commitment in the early years when it was much more difficult to do so. Thus they have a rank above those who joined the Prophet (ﷺ) and the Islamic State later; and in this manner, all would be given an honor commensurate with the order in which they joined. Such honor could take the form of social recognition or a larger share of the spoils of war; however the article does not specify.
- 41 **mushrik** – one who places rivals/competitors with Allah (ﷻ) in the area of His divinity, dominion, authority, and judgment.
- 42 This means that the committed Muslims have to act as one block to ensure that the issue remains between the affected parties — the victim's next of kin and the murderer — and does not become a political or legal football to be kicked around by people of influence, power, and wealth. However if the affected parties cannot settle the matter to each other's satisfaction, then it becomes the responsibility of Muslim deputies representing the general body of Muslims to invoke the death penalty on the guilty party.
- 43 **dismissal** – any effort by the felon to divert, sidetrack, substitute, or replace the penalty due to him.  
  
**swap arrangement** – any offer of settlement by the felon that equates to the crime that was committed (for example, a plea bargain).
- 44 Refers to Yathrib within its well-understood city limits, but not its outskirts.

45 Note that the first part of the article, “And if they [occupants of Madinah] are called to a truce...” is binding on all the occupants of Madinah, Muslim as well as non-Muslim; whereas the second part, “And if, on the other hand, they [the kāfirs] call upon the committed Muslims for a truce...” is specific to the Muslims.

46 There is little doubt among the authors of the Sīrah and the major collectors of the Hadith about the general wording of the Covenant, which is supported by multiple narrators; however the number of articles varies because each author, in an attempt to analyze and organize the meanings of the document for teaching purposes, has grouped the items differently. Thus Ibn Ishāq in Ibn Hishām’s rendition of the Sīrah (*Seeratun Nabi (Urdu)*, Volume 1, pp. 336–39), lists 37 articles, while Muḥammad Ḥusayn Haykal, in *The Life of Muhammad* (ﷺ), does not number the articles at all (pp. 180–83).

In this book, the author has taken a rendition of the Covenant as presented by Dr. Ḥamīdullāh in the reference below. Its 47 articles were translated into English from the original Arabic by Muḥammad al-Āṣī and edited by Br. Afeef Khan.

Dr. Muḥammad Ḥamīdullāh, *Al-Wathā’iq al-Siyāsīyah fī al-‘Ahd al-Nabawī wa-al-Khilāfah al-Rāshidah*, 7th edition. (Beirut, Lebanon: Dār an-Nafā’is, 2001), pp. 1–7.

47 Two hadith references in this regard are given below,

Umm al-Mu’minīn ‘Ā’ishah (رضي الله عنها) narrated, “I heard the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) say, ‘By his good akhlāq, a mu’min achieves a status on par with one who fasts regularly and offers ṣalāh the whole night’” (recorded by Abū Dāwūd in the Chapter, *Ḥusn al-Khuluq*, hadith number 4798).

إن المؤمن ليدرك بحسن خلقه درجة الصائم القائم

Abū Hurayrah (رضي الله عنه) narrated, “The noble Messenger (ﷺ) said, ‘Among the committed Muslims he has attained the best of imān who has the best of manners. And the best [in imān] among you is the one who is most kind and considerate toward his wife/wives’” (recorded by Aḥmad ibn Hanbal, hadith number 472/2).

أكمل المؤمنين إيماناً أحسنهم خلقاً وخياركم خياركم لنسائهم

48 Dr. Muḥammad Ḥamīdullāh, *Rasool-e Akram ki Siyaasi Zindagi (Urdu)*. (Karachi, Pakistan: Darul Asha’at, 2003), pp. 140–87.

- 49 **ummīyūn of Yathrib** – the member’s of the city’s tribes who had not been exposed to Allah’s (ﷻ) guidance in a meaningful sense. These people were addressed by the Prophet (ﷺ) as the “people of Yathrib” and not as *kāfirs*, *mushriks*, or the like, because they had not yet demonstrated an antagonism to Allah’s (ﷻ) command and counsel. One can only be characterized as a *kāfir* due to a rejection and/or denial of such guidance once presented.
- 50 Haykal, *The Life of Muhammad* (ﷺ), pp. 365–66.
- 51 Ibn Ishāq and Ibn Hishām, *Seeratun Nabi, Volume 1*, pp. 344–47;  
Martin Lings, *Muhammad* (ﷺ): *His Life Based on the Earliest Sources*.  
(Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia: Islamic Book Trust, 1983), p. 130;  
Haykal, *The Life of Muhammad* (ﷺ), p. 190.
- 52 Ibn Ishāq and Ibn Hishām, *Seeratun Nabi, Volume 1*, pp.158–59, pp.168–76;  
Al-Ṭabarī, *Tareekh-e Tabari, Volume 1*, pp. 281–82, pp. 293–302;  
Abū al-A’lā Mawdūdī, *Tafheem ul-Qur’an, Volume 2*. (Lahore, Pakistan:  
Maktaba-e Ta’meer-e Insaniyyat, 1974), pp. 58–63;  
Haykal, *The Life of Muhammad* (ﷺ), pp. 299–311.
- 53 Barkat Ahmad, *Muhammad and the Jews — A Re-examination*. (New Delhi,  
India: Vikas, 1979);  
W.N. ‘Arafāt, “New light on the story of Banu Qurayza and the Jews of  
Medina,” *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*.  
(London, UK: The Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland,  
1976), pp. 100–07;  
Ḥamīdullāh, *Rasool-e Akram ki Siyasi Zindagi*.
- 54 Narrated by Abū Mūsā al-Ash’arī (رضي الله عنه) and recorded by Ibn Taymiyah.  
أنا نبي الرحمة . و نبي النبوة . و نبي الملحمة
- 55 Dr. Ismā’il Rājī al-Fārūqī, *Islam and the Problem of Israel*. (London, UK:  
Islamic Council of Europe, 1980), p. 87.
- 56 For an explanation of the Qur’anic āyāt dealing with this situation,  
3:165–168, see the reference below,

Muḥammad al-‘Āṣī, *The Ascendant Qur’an: Realigning Man to the Divine Power Culture*, Volume 5. (Toronto, Canada: Institute of Contemporary Islamic Thought, 2011), pp. 224–32.

- 57 **Magna Carta** – Latin for the *Great Charter*. Despite its high sounding name, it does not include any great principles of law. It contains concessions wrung by rebellious barons from King John, an oppressive British ruler, following months of fighting and turmoil. The resulting agreement, which was drawn up in June 1215 at Runnymede outside London curtailed some of the king’s arbitrary powers (source: <http://www.bl.uk/treasures/magnacarta/basics/basics.html>).
- 58 Published on the internet by the US National Archives on the page entitled, *The Charters of Freedom: The Declaration of Independence*. (source: <http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/declaration.html>).
- 59 Published on the internet by the International Constitutional Law Project on the page entitled, *Saudi Arabia – Constitution*. (source: [http://www.servat.unibe.ch/icl/sa00000\\_.html](http://www.servat.unibe.ch/icl/sa00000_.html))







## TREATIES WITH THE TRIBES OUTSIDE OF MADINAH

### EXPANDING THE DOMAIN OF THE ISLAMIC STATE

In the 100-mile stretch between Madinah and the Red Sea port of Yanbu' that lies directly to the west, there resided a number of tribes. These included the Juhaynah, Ḍamrah, and Muzaynah as well as some of their clans. They were important because of their alliances with the two major tribes in Madinah — the Aws and Khazraj — as well as the Quraysh of Makkah. Dealings with them required tactful handling. More important, trade caravans, including those of the Quraysh, passed through or near their localities to and from Syria and Palestine. The Prophet (ﷺ) was keenly aware of the geo-strategic significance of these routes and the role these tribes could play in keeping track of the caravans' movements. The Makkan caravans could be intercepted and pressure exerted on the Makkan economy if these tribes cooperated with the Muslims. The Prophet (ﷺ) intended to cultivate and establish close alliances with these tribes to expand the reach of the Islamic State and strengthen his position vis-à-vis his Makkan foes. Moreover, contacts with the western tribes would also provide an opportunity to convey to them the message of Islam. The Qurayshī chiefs had usurped the

Muslims' wealth and were now using it to enrich themselves through trade. Worse, for 13 years the Quraysh had inflicted great suffering on the early Muslims; thus the latter, whose property and homes were confiscated, were completely justified in reacquiring this property, through war if necessary, if they so desired.

An additional advantage of the Islamic State's alliances with these tribes was that the Quraysh would be unable to incite them to fight against the Muslims. Thus, soon after the noble Messenger (ﷺ) stabilized and consolidated the situation in Madinah, he turned his attention to the neighboring tribes to the west. He considered them so important that he personally visited several of them, offering treaties of peace and friendship. The Juhaynah tribe resided near al-ʿĪṣ, a mere 30 miles from Madinah; it was an ally of the Khazraj tribe while the neighboring Muzaynah tribe was an ally of the Aws. It was on the strength of these alliances that both tribes had participated in the disastrous Bu'āth War in support of their respective allies in Madinah.<sup>1</sup>

When key members of the two principal tribes in Madinah, the Aws and Khazraj, accepted Islam, their enmity ended. The Covenant of Madinah further reinforced the atmosphere of reconciliation and brotherhood. According to the Arabian custom of the time, the allies of the signing parties were automatically considered part of the agreement and were therefore, granted the same status as their allies. Thus the westerly tribes that had alliances with the Aws and Khazraj also became allies of the Muslims, indeed of the Islamic State itself, on the basis of the Covenant. This point was also stipulated in Articles 32, 34, 35, and 40 of the Covenant.<sup>2</sup>

Since these outlying tribes had alliances with the Aws and Khazraj, the noble Messenger (ﷺ) did not assume that they were automatic signatories to the Covenant, that there was no need to take any additional steps to reinforce these links, or that there was no necessity to enter into formal alliances with them. He sought to strengthen existing links by personally visiting the Juhaynah, Muzaynah, and Ḍamrah tribes. It is not unreasonable to assume that these tribes would have known of the Muslims' migration to Madinah, especially the arrival of the noble Messenger of Allah (ﷺ).

This was an historic event in the life of the people of Madinah and had generated great excitement there. Similarly, news about the bond of brotherhood between the Muhājirūn and Anṣār as well as proclamation of the Covenant of Madinah must have reached these tribes by virtue of their close proximity to Madinah and their links with the indigenous tribes there. The point of real significance, from their perspective, was that enmity between the Aws and Khazraj had ended and that the remote tribes no longer needed to treat each other with hostility or hatred. Did these tribes consider themselves party to the Covenant of Madinah? Their attitude toward the Muslims would indicate that they did, but the situation was not so clear-cut because they also had alliances with the Quraysh, hence the Prophet's (ﷺ) deliberate decision to visit and cultivate them.

Some historians have claimed that the purpose of the missions to the west of Madinah was to keep an eye on the Makkan caravans in order to attack them.<sup>3</sup> This is only partially true. It was part of the noble Messenger's (ﷺ) strategy to exert pressure on the Quraysh, but attacking the caravans was not part of his plan. Perhaps relying on the attack argument, orientalist like Montgomery Watt have claimed that these missions were meant to “plunder” the caravans to secure provisions for the “destitute” Muhājirūn in Madinah.<sup>4</sup> If this indeed were the case, it would appear highly unusual that the Muslims were unable to “plunder” even one caravan despite repeated attempts that spanned almost an entire year. Besides, how were the Muhājirūn taken care of in the absence of booty from any of the “plundered” caravans?

Prior to the Battle of Badr in Ramaḍān (ninth month of the Islamic calendar) of 2AH, there were a total of eight expeditions — seven to the tribes residing west of Madinah, and one to Nakhlah, right outside Makkah — undertaken by the Muslims. None of these resulted in any major hostilities. The historian, Muḥammad ibn Ḥabīb al-Baghdādī (died 245AH), has suggested that there were two other expeditions, one to Yanbu' and the other to Safawān directed at the Banū Ghifār and Banū Aslam tribes respectively, to sign treaties with them. Both expeditions, to the west and southeast, reportedly took place in Sha'bān 2AH, a mere month before the

Battle of Badr.<sup>5</sup> Other historians are silent about these expeditions. A glance at those expeditions agreed upon by all historians, the date and place they were sent to, who led them, and their purpose would help us better understand them,

1. Ramaḍān, 1AH, led by Ḥamzaḥ (ﷺ) to Sayf al-Baḥr, to the Juhaynaḥ tribe;
2. Shawwāl, 1AH, led by ‘Ubaydaḥ ibn al-Ḥārith (ﷺ) to Rābiḡh, to the Ḍamraḥ tribe;
3. Dhū al-Qa’dah, 1AH, led by Sa’d ibn Abī Waqqās (ﷺ) to al-Kharrār, to the Ḍamraḥ tribe;
4. Ṣafar, 2AH, led by the noble Messenger (ﷺ) to Waddān, to the Ḍamraḥ tribe;
5. Rabī‘ al-Awwal, 2AH, led by the noble Messenger (ﷺ) to Bawāṭ, to the Juhaynaḥ tribe;
6. Rabī‘ al-Awwal, 2AH, led by the noble Messenger (ﷺ) to Safawān near Badr, to chase Kurz ibn Jābir al-Fihri who had stolen the Muslims’ cattle from Madinah;
7. Jumādā al-Ūlā, 2AH, led by the noble Messenger (ﷺ) to Dhū al-‘Ushayraḥ, to the Banū Mudlij tribe;
8. Rajab, 2AH, led by ‘Abdullāh ibn Jaḥsh (ﷺ) to Nakhlāḥ near Makkah, to gather information about the activities of the Quraysh.

An interesting picture emerges from the above. Two expeditions were sent to the Juhaynaḥ tribe, three to the Ḍamraḥ, and one to the Mudlij and other clans of Ḍamraḥ residing in the area near Banū Mudlij. Before the noble Messenger (ﷺ) personally visited the Juhaynaḥ and Ḍamraḥ tribes, his companions were dispatched to them first. Were such prior visits meant to assess possibilities and negotiate with the tribal leaders before the noble Messenger (ﷺ) finalized the deals by personally visiting them?

The first mission sent by the noble Messenger (ﷺ) was under the command of his uncle Ḥamzaḥ (ﷺ). It consisted of a mere 30 riders, all of them Muhājirūn. The mission was to the al-‘Īṣ locality of the Juhaynaḥ tribe. The fact that there were no Anṣār in the group may have led some historians — al-Wāqidī, al-Ṭabarī, Ibn

Kathīr, and others — to speculate that this indicated the aggressive intent of the mission since the Anṣārī pact with the noble Messenger (ﷺ) was only to defend him in Madinah and not to participate in any external offensive operations? Dr. Ḥamīdullāh has also supported this view in one of his works<sup>6</sup> stating that Ḥamzah's (رضي الله عنه) expedition was dispatched to intercept a Makkan caravan led by Abū Jahl, but later revises his assessment saying these expeditions were meant to establish defensive agreements with the outlying tribes.<sup>7</sup>

Although Ḥamzah's (رضي الله عنه) group encountered a 300-strong Qurayshī contingent at al-ʿĪṣ, led by Abū Jahl who was accompanying the caravan returning from Syria,<sup>8</sup> it seems unlikely, as Dr. Yasin Siddiqui has pointed out,<sup>9</sup> that its mission was to attack the caravan. If that indeed were the intention, the noble Messenger (ﷺ) would have dispatched a much larger force and would most likely have led the expedition himself. When the two groups confronted each other, they had a heated exchange of words. Abū Jahl was notorious for his quick temper and foul mouth, and Ḥamzah (رضي الله عنه) would not have tolerated such insolence, being equally firm in his convictions. While still in Makkah during the early days of Islam, Ḥamzah (رضي الله عنه) had struck Abū Jahl upon learning of his insult of the noble Messenger (ﷺ). Ḥamzah (رضي الله عنه) had confronted Abū Jahl who was sitting with his fellow Makhzūmis in the Ḥaram. This resulted in Ḥamzah (رضي الله عنه) accepting Islam and declaring it openly to challenge the assembled gathering. At Abū Jahl's intervention, the matter was dropped. At al-ʿĪṣ, fighting was prevented through the direct intervention of the Juhaynah chief, Majdī ibn ʿAmr al-Juhanī. He considered both the Muslims and the Quraysh as allies. The fact that Majdī considered the Muslims also as his allies is interesting; this confirms that the Juhaynah indeed had prior links with the Muslims; Ḥamzah's (رضي الله عنه) expedition was sent to reinforce these links rather than attack the caravan.

Within six months of arriving in Madinah, the noble Messenger (ﷺ) had made a strategic decision to exert economic pressure on the Quraysh by “intercepting” their caravans.<sup>10</sup> While exerting pressure on the Quraysh made perfect strategic sense,

there was also another, more important reason for such expeditions: to cultivate links with these tribes and enter into formal alliances with them. These were necessary for the survival and development of the nascent Islamic State in Madinah. Once the internal situation had been consolidated, it was important to expand its area of influence. Securing its external environment was the logical next step. This is also evident from the fact that similar alliances were also concluded with tribes to the east of Madinah. The western tribes were more important because of the trade routes and the impact such agreements would have on the Makkkan economy. This explains why the noble Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) sent most of the early expeditions, including several led by him personally, to the tribes located west of Madinah.

It was the Prophet's (ﷺ) Sunnah (practice) that whenever he met a group of people, he would invite them to Islam, emphasizing total commitment to the One God, Allah (ﷻ). He would also emphasize the importance of *ṣalāh* and payment of *zakāh*, two fundamental pillars of Islam. If they did not accept Islam, no pressure was exerted on them to do so. Instead, the local tribal chiefs were then persuaded to enter into mutual agreements of non-aggression and security. By pledging the help of Muslims if they faced aggression, it was intended to win them over. If no such agreement was forthcoming, then they were asked to remain neutral if the Muslims were involved in any conflict. From the Muslims' perspective, this was equally acceptable; it would prevent the Quraysh from instigating these tribes against the emerging Islamic pulse in Madinah. Securing the area around Madinah, however, was the primary consideration for such treaties because the Quraysh were bound to attack the fledgling Islamic State, sooner rather than later.

These measures were also necessary to help consolidate Islamic rule in Madinah. Peace and security, both within and around Madinah, were a prerequisite to eliminate *jāhili* practices from society and replace them with Islamic principles as well as to defend the city from external aggression. The Prophet's (ﷺ) approach was always to win people over by appealing to their better nature and explain to them the principles of Islam with kindness and compas-

sion. He offered them peace, security, and friendship; only the Quraysh and the people of al-Ṭā'if were totally intransigent and averse to any offers of non-aggression since they realized that their idol-based system of exploitation would be adversely affected if Islam gained a foothold. In the inevitable clash with the Quraysh whose economic lifeline would gradually be squeezed now, Madinah's defense perimeter had to be extended beyond its immediate environment. Alliances with various tribes would provide that crucial strategic depth. When we consider the text of the treaties offered to various tribes, they not only indicate his dominant power position but also a remarkable degree of magnanimity on the part of the noble Messenger of Allah (ﷺ). He could have threatened them but he did not do so; the aim was to win them over, not turn them against the Islamic State. The larger objective of isolating the Quraysh would also not be achieved. Besides, incurring the enmity of the surrounding tribes would have made life quite difficult for the Muslims in Madinah as well. This would have resulted in the Muslims facing threats from the Quraysh of Makkah as well as the tribes residing to the west of Madinah. It was not a good strategy to create enemies or take them all on at once.

According to Ibn Ishāq, the noble Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) did not leave Madinah during the first year after the Hijrah.<sup>11</sup> Naturally, there were many issues requiring his personal attention and his time was totally consumed by consolidating the internal situation in Madinah. In the month of Ṣafar in 2AH, he personally led an expedition to Waddān, also referred to as Abwā'.<sup>12</sup> According to Ibn Ishāq's version, the intention was to attack the Qurayshī caravan, and its escort and ally, the Banū Ḍamrah ibn Bakr ibn Kinānah tribe. A clash was averted through the mediation of Makhshī ibn 'Amr al-Ḍamrī, chief of the Ḍamrah tribe. The Prophet (ﷺ) did not press the matter and returned to Madinah after spending 15 days in the locality.<sup>13</sup>

Other scholars, Dr. Ḥamidullāh being one, have stated that the Makkan caravan had already left the area before the Muslims arrived.<sup>14</sup> If so, the Muslims could easily have pursued and caught up with it but they did not do so. Instead of returning "empty-handed,"

he states that the Prophet (ﷺ) contacted the nearby tribes and entered into a formal agreement with Makhshī ibn ‘Amr al-Ḍamrī.<sup>15</sup> If Makhshī was providing protection to the Makkan caravan, it is unlikely he would have entered into an agreement of friendship with the Prophet (ﷺ) while knowing that the Muslims came to attack the caravan. The more likely explanation is that the Prophet (ﷺ) had gone on a mission of friendship, setting out to achieve a formal agreement of non-aggression. This is also reinforced by the fact that two earlier missions — led by his companions ‘Ubaydah ibn al-Ḥārith in Shawwāl, 1AH, and Sa’d ibn Abī Waqqās (رضي الله عنه) in Dhū al-Qa’dah, 1AH — were sent by the noble Messenger (ﷺ), to the same area before undertaking his own mission. The noble Messenger’s (ﷺ) mission occurred within three months of Sa’d’s initial ground-breaking.

During his mission Sa’d had appropriated some cattle belonging to Banū Ḍamraḥ and returned with them to Madinah. When the noble Messenger (ﷺ) learned of this, he immediately returned the cattle, not only because he had a peace treaty with Banū Ḍamraḥ, but also because the concluding article of the Covenant states, “*that this document shall constitute no protection for the offender or the criminal.*”<sup>16</sup> On his own mission, the noble Messenger (ﷺ) spent 15 days with the Ḍamraḥ tribe. While this clearly was not enough time for the Makkan caravan to return from Syria, it was sufficient to cultivate links and to propagate the message of Islam among the Ḍamraḥ tribesmen. Several members of the Ḍamraḥ tribe already had relations with the noble Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) even while he was in Makkah. Shibli Naumani also rejects the targeting of trade caravans argument for the purpose of plundering goods, saying if that indeed was the purpose, were there no caravans other than those of the Quraysh that the Muslims could have intercepted prior to the Battle of Badr? There is no evidence of any other caravans ever being intercepted, much less plundered.<sup>17</sup>

Dr. Ḥamīdullāh gives the text of the treaty reached with Banū Ḍamraḥ, a branch of Banū Kinānah, based on accounts in Ibn Sa’d and al-Suhaylī’s *Rawḍ al-Anf*. The other branches of the Kinānah included Banū Bakr ibn Manāt, Banū Ghifār, Banū Layth, Banū



Dayl, Banū Mudlij, and Banū Juzaymaḥ. Not all of them resided west of Madinah. Some, like Banū Ghifār, had their settlements northwest of Makkah and two brothers from the tribe, Anīs and Abū Dharr al-Ghifārī, had accepted Islam while the noble Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) was still in Makkah. Many members of Banū Ghifār had already entered Islam before the Battle of Badr. There were other tribes as well — the Juhaynaḥ and Muzaynaḥ — that resided in the area between Madinah and Yanbu'. They, too, were contacted so that similar treaties could be enacted to win them over.

### **The Ḍamraḥ Tribe**

Before considering the text of the treaty, some pertinent points need highlighting. The Ḍamraḥ had become so large and influential that it could no longer be considered merely a branch of Kinānaḥ. Dr. Ḥamīdullāh, quoting Ibn Sa'd, states that one of its branches, Banū 'Abd ibn 'Adī, was settled within the boundaries of Makkah.<sup>18</sup> Living among the Quraysh, it would not have wanted to incur their enmity by joining any pact against them, especially with the Muslims who were viewed by the Quraysh as enemies. But it must have been the result of intense pressure from their fellow tribesmen near Madinah that Banū 'Adī sent a delegation to the Prophet (ﷺ) offering a treaty of friendship while retaining their links with the Quraysh. Given their peculiar circumstances, they said that except for fighting against the Quraysh, they were prepared to be allies of the Muslims and would assist in every other way. The noble Messenger (ﷺ) accepted their offer and granted them a treaty of peace and security. Similarly, a treaty with Banū Ghifār appears to have been signed nearer the time of the Battle of Badr.<sup>19</sup> Prior to Islam, most members of Banū Ghifār tribe were highwaymen (brigands); some of them including Abū Dharr, had become Christians. They had no regard for the sacred months considering them as pagan customs. They used to attack and rob pilgrims' caravans even during the Hajj season. When Abū Dharr came to Makkah to accept Islam and he revealed his occupation

(raiding caravans), the noble Messenger (ﷺ) is reported to have exclaimed, “Indeed, Allah guides whom He wills!”<sup>20</sup> Yet another branch of the Kinānah was Banū Bakr, a mischievous clan that later violated the Treaty of Ḥudaybiyah by attacking the Muslims’ ally, the Khuzā’ah tribe. Under the terms of the treaty, the Muslims were obliged to assist their Khuzā’ah allies. Banū Bakr’s violation of Ḥudaybiyah resulted in the Muslims’ marching on Makkah, liberating it in Ramaḍān of 8AH, without fighting or shedding blood.

### Text of the Treaty with Banū Ḍamrah

The very first clause of the treaty (refer to Exhibit 9) establishes the dominant position of the noble Messenger of Allah (ﷺ); he is granting them this treaty with the permission of Allah (ﷻ), promising complete security to individuals as well as their property. Help is promised to them in case they are attacked; members of Banū Ḍamrah are similarly obliged to aid the Muslims whenever called upon to do so. It is made clear that they would be helped so long as they upheld the terms of the treaty. Naturally, those violating the treaty would not be helped by the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) or his companions. It is interesting to note that while Banū Ḍamrah were expected to assist the Muslims, similar treaties granted to others, such as the Juhaynah, did not require them to do so. The different terms offered to each tribe were clearly based on their relations with the Muslims. Several members of the Ḍamrah tribe had accepted Islam in the early days of the Muslims’ migration to Madinah, although there is evidence of interaction with some of their members even earlier. In Makkah, ‘Amr ibn Umayyah al-Ḍamrī, for instance, had close relations with the noble Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) and was so trusted that he was sent on several missions to the Negus in Abyssinia. ‘Amr was married to the daughter of the Prophet’s (ﷺ) cousin, ‘Ubaydah, son of his uncle, al-Ḥārith, the eldest of all his uncles and aunts. ‘Ubaydah was martyred in the Battle of Badr.

‘Amr ibn Umayyah al-Ḍamrī was thus a distant relative of the noble Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) through marriage. ‘Amr’s father,

**Exhibit 9** – The agreement with Banū Ḍamrah.

In the name of Allah, the Mercy-Giving, the Merciful.

1. This is a document [initiated] by Muhammad, Messenger of Allah, for Banū Ḍamrah.
2. That they shall have complete security of their persons and property.
3. And that they are entitled to assistance [from the Muslims] against whosoever attacks them, except if they are fought in matters relating to Allah's *dīn*; and that this [pledge of assistance] will last as long as there is water in the sea.
4. And that it is incumbent upon them to come to the aid of the Prophet whenever he calls upon them to do so; and with this [agreement], they are considered to be safeguarded by Allah and His Messenger.
5. And that they are entitled to assistance and this assistance is due particularly because of the *muttaqī* and virtuous persons amongst them.<sup>21</sup>

Umayyah ibn Khālīd, is also reported to have accepted Islam along with several other members of the clan in the time between the Hijrah and the Battle of Uḥud. One member of the clan, Ju'āl ibn Surāqah al-Ḍamrī had migrated to Madinah and fought alongside the Muslims in the Battle of Uḥud while 'Amr, who did not take part in any fighting, was reported to nonetheless have been in the Makkan camp. Opinions as to when 'Amr accepted Islam vary but it was around the time of the Battle of Uḥud. If this is true, it would indicate that the Prophet (ﷺ) trusted him so much as to make him the Muslims' emissary to the court of the Abyssinian king soon after the Battle of Badr, even though 'Amr had not yet embraced Islam. After the Muslims' victory at Badr, resulting in the death of many

leading figures of Makkah, the Quraysh dispatched another delegation, again led by ‘Amr ibn al-Āṣ, to convince the Negus to expel the Muslim refugees whose co-religionists in Madinah had killed so many leaders of Makkah. This Qurayshī mission also ended in failure; the king had secretly become a Muslim although this fact was neither known to the Quraysh nor many of his own countrymen because of uncertain conditions in the Negus’s country. ‘Amr ibn Umayyah al-Ḍamrī was sent by the noble Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) to Abyssinia to neutralize the Qurayshī mischief and to consolidate friendship with the Negus.

### **The Juhaynah Tribe**

The Juhaynah, a major tribe outside Madinah, also had a number of sub-clans — some settled, others nomadic. Their branches were spread out along the western coast of the Peninsula, with some settled as far south as Yemen. One of their leaders, ‘Amr ibn Murrah (رضي الله عنه), embraced Islam while on a pilgrimage to Makkah before the Prophet’s (ﷺ) migration to Madinah.<sup>22</sup> After spending some time in Makkah, ‘Amr ibn Murrah (رضي الله عنه) returned to Yemen to propagate the message of Islam. Regarding the tribes settled to the west of Madinah toward Yanbu’, the noble Messenger (ﷺ) personally visited them and offered written treaties of friendship and security. Juhaynah was the first tribe outside Madinah visited by the Muslims. That mission, led by Ḥamzah (رضي الله عنه) to al-‘Īṣ in the month of Ramaḍān of the first year of the Hijrah, was followed, six months later, by the noble Messenger’s (ﷺ) personal visit. He went much farther than Ḥamzah (رضي الله عنه), going to Bawāṭ located about 48 miles from Madinah, and spending nearly a month among this tribe. What was the purpose of such a long stay? It would appear that the noble Messenger (ﷺ) visited a number of clans that lived between al-‘Īṣ and Bawāṭ, conveyed to them the message of Islam, and offered them formal alliances with the Muslims. According to traditional Sirāḥ sources, initially not many from the Juhaynah tribe accepted Islam but they were open to formal agreements with the noble Messenger of Allah (ﷺ). From the text of the treaty, it is evident that the noble

Messenger's (ﷺ) authority is clearly accepted by the clans. Given their tribal and clan rivalries, they must have felt assured that they now had a more formidable ally in the Islamic State.

Help was promised if they were attacked unjustly. While they were not asked to provide any armed assistance to the Muslims, the fact that they were assured support meant that they would not help the Quraysh if the latter attacked Madinah. The Quraysh were a powerful tribe whose prestige was greatly enhanced because the Ka'bah was located in Makkah. The city was also an important trading center where an annual trade fair was organized and attended by tribes from all over Arabia and beyond. To further consolidate their power in the Peninsula, the Quraysh gave financial incentives to these tribes in return for provisions of protection for Makkan caravans.

Few would want to take on a powerful and influential adversary like the Quraysh without carefully weighing the consequences of such action. The Prophet (ﷺ) however was able to secure agreements with the tribes residing in the areas surrounding Madinah. The treaty offered to Juhaynah did not demand that they become Muslim before help would be provided. If any of its members wanted to embrace Islam, they were welcome to do so but the treaty was not contingent upon it. Securing their neutrality vis-à-vis the Quraysh was itself a major achievement since it undermined support for Quraysh, especially in an area so far away from their home in Makkah.

### **Text of the Treaty with Juhaynah**

Several points can be immediately ascertained from the agreement (refer to Exhibit 10). Unlike the treaty with the ʿDamrah tribe, the treaty with Juhaynah does not begin with the declaration that this treaty is being granted by Allah (ﷻ) and His Messenger (ﷺ). This would indicate that most of its members had not accepted Islam yet. However, at the same time, the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) and his followers are considered to be the stronger party since they are the ones offering protection to Juhaynah. Next, the Juhaynah are promised

**Exhibit 10** – The agreement with Juhaynah.

1. They [the Juhaynah tribe] shall have complete security of their persons and property.
2. And they are entitled to assistance [from the Muslims] if they are violated or attacked [in any way], except in matters related to intra-clan feuding and the establishment of [Allah's] *dīn*.
3. And whosoever of their nomadic allies honors the validity, truth, and good will of this agreement will be extended the same terms as those granted to the urban dwellers. And it is Allah who is the source of help or assistance.<sup>23</sup>

help in case they are attacked or an injustice is committed against them. It is interesting to note that the principle of justice is emphasized in almost all the treaties the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) signed with various tribes. Equally significant is the fact that he stipulated in writing that Muslims would not interfere in the internal conflicts or cultural disputes of tribes or clans. Each tribe had numerous clans and they frequently fought each other; there were several conflicts within the Juhaynah tribe as well. The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) told them in advance that he would not involve himself or the Muslims in their internal disputes. This ensured that the Muslims would remain focused on making preparations to face the far more serious threat from the Quraysh. Such adherence to neutrality in others' internal disputes prevented the Muslims from dissipating their energies on peripheral issues. Today, non-interference in others' internal affairs is recognized as a fundamental principle of diplomacy and international law yet the noble Messenger (ﷺ) included this clause in his treaties with the tribes more than 1,400 years ago.

Since most members of the Juhaynah tribe had not accepted Islam, asking them for help on the basis of Islamic brotherhood

would not have worked. The tribe also had friendly relations with the Quraysh; thus, it was a major achievement to secure their neutrality in the event of war with the latter given that the Muslims had yet to prove their mettle in any battle. The Muslims were in fact viewed as weak since they had been forced to flee Makkah. So keen was the Prophet (ﷺ) to win the tribe over that he even granted land as an inducement. For instance, ‘Awsajāh ibn Ḥarmalah al-Juhanī was granted vast estates near Dhū al-Marwaḥ. It was in this area that new Muslims started to seek sanctuary after escaping from Makkah following the Treaty of Ḥudaybiyah. Under the terms of the treaty, escapees from Makkah were not permitted to stay in Madinah; they had to be handed back to the Quraysh even if they were Muslims. This particular article (as we shall see later when discussing the Treaty of Ḥudaybiyah in Chapter 5) was most difficult for the Muslims to accept at the time the treaty was being signed. Unable to stay in Madinah, escapees from Makkah started to hide in the hills near Dhū al-Marwaḥ and began to harass the Makkan caravans. These events forced the Quraysh to propose to the Prophet (ﷺ) that this article in the treaty be abrogated.<sup>24</sup>

The Muslims’ interaction with the Juhaynah soon led to most of its members accepting Islam, with its principles of equality and justice acting as powerful inducements. When the number of Muslims increased, the Prophet (ﷺ) granted them another treaty, this one outlining instructions relating to their conduct as Muslims. In keeping with the Prophet’s (ﷺ) approach, these too, were written down. The second document is given in Exhibit 11.

From the contents of this document, it is clear that it must have been granted in the latter part of the Prophet’s (ﷺ) life. The prohibition of usury was instituted in the last year of his prophetic mission (2:275–281). The Prophet (ﷺ) also referred to the prohibition of usury in his final *khuṭbah* at Ḥajjah al-Wadaʿ, delivered in the tenth year of the Hijrah.<sup>25</sup> Similarly, *āyāt* relating to complete dissociation from the *mushriks* were revealed in the ninth year of the Hijrah (9:1–18).<sup>26</sup>

It is worth noting that while the propagation of Islam was the fundamental purpose of the prophetic mission, at times it was

**Exhibit 11** – An outline of Juhaynah's Islamic responsibilities.

1. Whosoever from them [the Juhaynah] accepts Islam, institutionalizes *ṣalāh*, ensures the systematic disbursal of *zakāh*, obeys Allah and His Messenger, pays [to the Islamic State] one-fifth of the spoils of war, along with the share of the Prophet, declares his Islam openly, and dissociates himself from the *mushriks*, will have security under the protection of Allah and Muhammad.
2. And any Muslim who owes a registered debt shall be liable to pay only the principal, for [all claims of] *ribā* have been henceforth abolished from [all] loan contracts.
3. And one-tenth of all agricultural produce must be reserved as aid for the poor.
4. And anyone who joins and integrates into them [the Juhaynah] will be entitled to what they are entitled.

not pursued as vigorously as might have been expected because of other considerations, such as peace and security of the Islamic State. This is what we find in the treaties offered to the tribes residing to the west of Madinah. Alliances were offered and locked down without requiring these tribes to accept Islam. It was implicit in the terms of the treaty that people would be free to do so, and sufficient encouragement to that end was duly given by the Prophet (ﷺ). Also, when these tribes had an opportunity to interact with the Muslims, the latter's noble and upright character automatically attracted them to Islam. The same principle was at work in the Covenant of Madinah. There too, people were not asked to become Muslim before they were given protection under the treaty.

What was clearly recognized in the Covenant was the concept of citizenship of the Islamic State, a novel idea for people only familiar with clan or tribal loyalty. Proving to be very effec-



tive as soon as it was agreed upon, the Covenant guaranteed any person living within the boundaries of Madinah, or any living outside but agreeing to abide by its terms, the rights and responsibilities of citizenship and entitled him to full protection. At the same time, each member was called upon neither to betray the Islamic State nor aid and abet the enemy, primarily the Quraysh, nor those perpetrating oppression or injustice. In case of the Juhaynah tribe, they were even granted financial concessions to win them over.

### **Treaty with Banū Zur‘aḥ and Banū Rab‘aḥ**

Banū Zur‘aḥ and Banū Rab‘aḥ were sub-clans of the Juhaynah. The Prophet (ﷺ) offered them treaties similar to those offered to others, promising help and protection if they were attacked. The noble Messenger (ﷺ) refused to take sides in their internal disputes; he was willing to mediate if the parties so desired but would not get involved on the side of one over the other. It may be asked: why was it necessary to sign separate treaties with the sub-clans of the Juhaynah when the treaty stipulated that its provisions already covered all of its clans? The reason is that these clans were at loggerheads with Majdī ibn ‘Amr, chief of Juhaynah, and they did not trust him, fearing he might attack them. It was for this reason that the noble Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) offered protection against any attack not only from the Quraysh but also from Majdī. It is possible that the clans may have demurred had no such protection been offered to them directly. This had the added advantage of preventing Majdī from attacking other clans, once he was aware that these clans also had treaties with the noble Messenger of Allah (ﷺ). The purpose was to bring in as many tribes and clans into treaty arrangements as possible, all the while preparing for the inevitable clash with the Quraysh. The text of the document is given in Exhibit 12.

Again, we notice, that while the noble Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) promised them help if they were attacked, he also made it clear that Muslims would not be drawn into their internal affairs nor would the Muslims take sides in their internal disputes. Help

**Exhibit 12** – Agreement with Banū Zur‘ah and Banū Rab‘ah.

1. They [the clans of Banū Zur‘ah and Banū Rab‘ah] shall have complete security of their persons and property.
2. And they are entitled to assistance [from the Muslims] if they are violated or attacked [in any way], except in matters related to intra-clan feuding and the establishment of [Allah’s] *dīn*.
3. And whosoever of their nomadic allies honors the validity, truth, and good will of this agreement will be extended the same terms as those granted to the urban dwellers. And it is Allah who is the source of help or assistance.<sup>27</sup>

was promised only in case of external aggression. This point is important. The clans had to be assured that the Muslims would come to their rescue, if by declaring neutrality, this would result in the Quraysh, the most powerful tribe in Arabia, threatening to attack them. According to Article 3 of the treaty these rights were also extended to the people of conscience in the outlying vicinities of these tribes, “...and whosoever of their nomadic allies honors the validity, truth, and good will of this agreement will be extended the same terms as those granted to the urban dwellers,” but the guarantee of the protection of these rights did not require the beneficiaries to provide any direct help to the Muslims. They were only expected to remain neutral. The emphasis on those who “...honor the validity, truth, and good will of this agreement” is important; Islam’s help and protection does not extend to the unjust or those inclined to criminal behavior.

### **Treaty with the Muzaynah Tribe<sup>28</sup>**

The Muzaynah tribe, also residing to the west of Madinah, was a rival of Juhaynah. As a result of this rivalry, the two tribes were aligned on opposite sides in the conflict between the Khazraj and Aws. Since the Juhaynah were allies of Khazraj, the Muzaynah sided with their rival, the Aws. It was on the basis of these alliances that they had participated in the Bu'āth War in support of their Madinan allies. The acceptance of Islam by members of the Aws and Khazraj, the migration of a large number of Muslims from Makkah to Madinah, and the implementation of the Covenant created an atmosphere of peace and brotherhood in Madinah. Old rivalries between the Aws and Khazraj ended, resulting in a reduction of tension between their allied tribes as well; however, it would take a longer time for personal animosities to die down completely. There was still a need for diplomatic initiatives among these outlying tribes in order to bind them to formal agreements with the Muslims. It was to this aspect that the noble Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) turned his attention once he had politically reorganized the power constituencies of Madinah.

Some members of Muzaynah had accepted Islam before the Battle of Uḥud in 3AH, and two of its members were martyred in this battle.<sup>29</sup> In the fifth year of the Hijrah, a delegation of 400 Muslims from Muzaynah came to Madinah — becoming the first tribe to do so — to pledge allegiance to the noble Messenger (ﷺ) and the Islamic State.<sup>30</sup> They wanted to settle in Madinah but the noble Messenger (ﷺ) asked them to return to their locality since in their absence the *mushriks* might take advantage and occupy their lands, thereby using this strategic position to launch hostile acts against the Muslims.<sup>31</sup> Even though they returned to their dwellings as instructed, this did not diminish their commitment to the Islamic State. In the 10,000-strong Muslim army that marched on Makkah in 8AH, there were more than 1,100 members of the Muzaynah tribe. They were also well represented in the Battle of Ḥunayn (8AH), soon after the liberation of Makkah, and the expedition to Tabūk (9AH).

One of the chiefs of Muzaynah, Bilāl ibn Ḥārith al-Muzaynī, was granted a number of mines as well as land by the noble

Messenger (ﷺ) to win him over and earn his friendship. In the letter granting him the mines, the Prophet (ﷺ) stated that this gift “*did not violate the rights of any Muslim.*” In other words, the mine was part of the possession of the Islamic State; individual Muslims had no rights or deeds of ownership over it. In 1945, a stone tablet, bearing an inscription confirming the Prophet’s (ﷺ) granting of this mine to Bilāl, was discovered in an old cemetery near the mine.<sup>32</sup> Further, *Sirāḥ* scholars say that no *zakāḥ* has ever been levied on this mine.

### Treaty with Banū Mudlij

The Banū Mudlij tribe, a clan of the Kinānaḥ, lived at Dhū al-‘Ushayrah in the district of Yanbu‘. Accompanied by 150 to 200 companions and with some 30 camels they took turns riding, the noble Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) visited Banū Mudlij in Jumādā al-Ūlā of 2AH, but did not go directly west to reach Dhū al-‘Ushayrah. Instead, he first took a northwesterly route, staying at several locations along the way before finally arriving in the locality of Banū Mudlij. What was the purpose of going northwest first instead of straight to Dhū al-‘Ushayrah? While *Sirāḥ* scholars are silent on this point, it can be surmised that his strategy must have been to establish contact with as many tribes and clans along the way as possible. Islam’s message had to be spread far and wide and the noble Messenger (ﷺ) utilized every such opportunity.

While some historians (Ibn Hishām and Ibn Sa’d) have claimed that the purpose of the expedition to Dhū al-‘Ushayrah was to target the Syria-bound, Makkan caravan led by Abū Sufyān, this is not supported by any empirical evidence. If the caravan were the intended target, the noble Messenger (ﷺ) would have headed straight west to reach the trade route on which the caravan was supposedly traveling. It is not even clear whether the caravan had crossed the area or, according to other historians, if it had left Makkah at all. The noble Messenger (ﷺ) spent nearly 45 days after he arrived in Dhū al-‘Ushayrah. Why such a long stay? On his two earlier visits, he had stayed 15 and 30 days respective-

ly. On both those occasions, he had granted treaties to the tribes and their clans.

His visit to Dhū al-‘Ushayrah clearly was intended to cultivate relations and enter into treaties of friendship with Banū Mudlij as well as some clans of Banū Ḍamrah that resided in the area, and to convey the message of Islam. The noble Messenger (ﷺ) and his companions were so well received by Banū Mudlij that they were lavishly entertained throughout their stay as would befit respected friends and allies. This was clearly an expression of fellowship and acceptance of the noble Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) as their ally. Given this atmosphere of amity, Banū Mudlij was granted a treaty of friendship whose terms were similar to those granted to the other tribes discussed earlier. The treaty was not contingent upon their accepting Islam; nor were they asked for any help in case the Muslims were attacked. Their obligation was to remain neutral if there was fighting between the Muslims and the Quraysh. Banū Mudlij readily accepted this offer.

During this mission, the noble Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) also granted treaties to some of the sub-clans of Banū Ḍamrah that lived nearby. The fact that he spent more than six weeks in the vicinity of Yanbu‘ indicates the importance he attached to these tribes. A clear pattern is discernable: in his first mission to Banū Ḍamrah, he spent 15 days in Waddān; when he visited Juhaynah in Waddāt, he stayed for about a month; this time round, he spent more than 45 days. It also indicates that these tribes were receptive to the message being delivered, especially one of friendship and mutual cooperation. To this point, this was the noble Messenger’s (ﷺ) longest absence from Madinah. The warm reception he was accorded must have comforted him immensely and would come as a great relief in those otherwise difficult and troubled times. With Banū Mudlij and the sub-clans of Banū Ḍamrah also linked into treaties of friendship with the Muslims, the Islamic State had secured its western flank almost completely. Even at this early stage, the Prophet (ﷺ) was teaching the Muslims that the *political* consolidation of the collective Islamic will, which at this point included mostly non-Muslims, was an essential building block in the string of military victories

that would come later. These treaties also made life more precarious for the Quraysh since movement of their caravans would now be increasingly subject to Muslim pressure.

Another effect of these treaties was that the message of Islam was conveyed to the tribes experientially, interwoven into their treaty obligations and communal responsibilities to each other as well as to their allies. As they were engaging with real-life issues — war, occupation, treaties, murder, partisanship, etc. — they began to understand that the Islamic message was going to politically, economically, and socially reorganize their culture, aligning it to a new reference point: the *taqwá* of Allah (ﷻ). They understood this not only because it put an end to a past filled with generational feuding, but also because it opened up a future in which the Arab spirit would be as noble as its language. The Prophet's (ﷺ) example — his individual character as well as his public persona as a principled head of state — immediately put individual devotional activities on par with their redemption in the domain of social justice, where sincerity to Allah (ﷻ) in private translates into organizing human relationships according to His counsel.

Initially, the number of people accepting Islam was relatively small. But these numbers swelled fairly quickly as the emerging power of Islam in Madinah ushered in the presence of a heretofore unknown leadership culture that valued fairness and kindness in its dealings with others. In the earliest battles — Badr, Uhud and al-Aḥzāb, for instance — the number of people from these tribes participating in support of the Muslims was very small. According to most accounts, there were just a few individuals from each tribe but by the time the noble Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) marched on Makkah in Ramaḍān of 8AH, this number had swelled to several hundred. With the exception of Banū Bakr ibn Manāt, the other clans of the Kinānah had not only accepted Islam but also willingly joined campaigns against those opposing the noble Messenger (ﷺ).

At the time of the Battle of Badr, most of the areas west of Madinah had been either secured or neutralized by the noble Messenger of Allah (ﷺ). While the bulk of diplomatic energies were consumed in forming alliances with the more strategically posi-

tioned western tribes, he did not neglect the tribes residing to the east or southeast of Madinah. The most important of these was Banū Ghifār whose most prominent member, Abū Dharr al-Ghifārī (رضي الله عنه), had already accepted Islam while the noble Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) was still in Makkah. As a result of Abū Dharr's (رضي الله عنه) efforts, virtually the entire tribe had entered the fold of Islam by the time the Battle of Badr took place in Ramaḍān of 2AH. Banū Ghifār's acceptance of Islam meant that gradually Muslims were winning supporters not only along the trade routes but also around Makkah. The Qurayshī chiefs must have felt the Islamic shock waves emanating out of Madinah, even if they were too arrogant to acknowledge the growing influence of Islam. Their eyes were focused on Madinah, consumed by their hatred of the noble Messenger (ﷺ) and immersed in the belief that if they were to strike there, they could easily wipe out Islam.

### **Treaty with Banū Ghifār<sup>33</sup>**

Though a branch of Banū Ḍamrah, Banū Ghifār was an important tribe in its own right.<sup>34</sup> As mentioned earlier, the well-known *ṣahābī*, Abū Dharr al-Ghifārī (رضي الله عنه), as his name suggests, belonged to this tribe. After becoming a Muslim, he was sent by the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) to invite members of his tribe to Islam. More than half the tribe accepted Islam before the Hijrah and the rest soon thereafter. Ibn Sa'd goes so far as to state that the entire tribe had accepted Islam at the time of the Hijrah.<sup>35</sup> Abū Dharr's (رضي الله عنه) efforts also brought nearly half the members of the neighboring Aslam clan of Khuzā'aḥ into the fold of Islam. The Khuzā'aḥ resided to the southwest of Makkah.

Unlike most other tribes, Banū Ghifār themselves sent a delegation to the Prophet (ﷺ) requesting a treaty. This was accepted and the Prophet (ﷺ) approved the treaty reproduced in Exhibit 13. Unique to the remote tribes, Banū Ghifār is declared as "...one with the Muslims and shall enjoy the same rights and fulfill the same obligations as Muslims." They are even asked to help the Muslims when the noble Messenger (ﷺ) asks them to do so; however, the treaty

**Exhibit 13** – Agreement with Banū Ghifār.

1. They [Banū Ghifār] shall be considered as one with the Muslims and shall enjoy the same rights and fulfill the same obligations as Muslims.
2. And the Prophet has pledged a guarantee of protection from Allah and His Messenger for their property and persons.
3. And they shall be entitled to assistance against an enemy that initiates injustices against them.
4. And should the Prophet ask them for assistance, they shall respond in kind and are duty-bound to provide help, except for those who fight against [Allah's] *dīn*; this agreement is valid in perpetuity.
5. And this document should not be construed to prohibit justice being applied to a crime.<sup>36</sup>

does not give them licence to provide assistance to those who engage in a fight against Islam. It has been suggested that this treaty was signed after the Battle of Badr.<sup>37</sup> Further, the stipulation that they are as “...*one with the Muslims*” is the same as the one granted to the Jews in Madinah through Article 25 of the Covenant. Even though they were not all Muslims, they were considered as one with the Muslims, meaning that they were strong allies and were therefore obliged to defend the Islamic State. The proviso against providing help to Islam’s enemies (the fourth point in Exhibit 13) is the same as that for the Jews in Article 46 of the Covenant.<sup>38</sup>

If we consider that the noble Messenger (ﷺ) instructed Abū Dharr al-Ghifārī (رضي الله عنه) to return to his tribe and invite others to Islam, it is reasonable to assume that in the period between his conversion to Islam in Makkah and the Battle of Badr, a period of some eight years, there must have been numerous conversions among Banū Ghifār. Even if the entire tribe had not accepted Islam, a sig-



nificant number must have entered Islam in the eight-year period. Thus, coupled with the fact that they were granted this treaty after the Battle of Badr, the expectations from them were much greater. They, in turn, were given much higher status in the treaty — at par with the Muslims — a singular honor for people who were not all Muslims and did not even reside inside the boundaries of Madinah as those included in the Covenant.

### **Ashja' and 'Āmir ibn Akramah<sup>39</sup>**

Ashja' was a branch of the Ghaṭafān tribe that resided northeast of Madinah. According to Dr. Ḥamīdullāh, when the Muslims tightened their grip on the trade routes and started to exert economic pressure on Makkah, it adversely affected the tribes straddling these routes. Their livelihood depended on income gained from serving the Makkan caravans. With their economic situation deteriorating, these tribes sent a delegation to Madinah to ask for a treaty of friendship. This was granted to them by the Prophet (ﷺ), causing the Quraysh to become further isolated in the Peninsula.

The agreement with Nu'aym ibn Mas'ūd al-Ashja'ī (رضي الله عنه) was also signed during this period. He had accepted Islam before the Battle of al-Aḥzāb and played a crucial role in exposing the treachery of Banū Qurayẓah. This was the Jewish tribe that was supposed to remain neutral but was persuaded by the chief of Banū al-Naḍir — another Jewish tribe that had been earlier expelled from Madinah and resided in Khaybar — to violate the agreement and side with the besieging *mushrik* tribes. Nu'aym (رضي الله عنه) was able to create doubts between the invading tribes and Banū Qurayẓah, thus frustrating their plot against the Muslims.<sup>40</sup> When Nu'aym became a Muslim, the Prophet (ﷺ) granted him the agreement shown in Exhibit 14. A similar agreement related to the Ashja'is was granted to the tribe of 'Āmir ibn Akramah. One of their chiefs was also granted land, according to Dr. Ḥamīdullāh.<sup>41</sup>

**Exhibit 14** – Pledge made by Nu‘aym ibn Mas‘ūd al-Ashja‘ī and accepted by the Prophet (ﷺ).

In the name of Allah, the Mercy-Giving, the Merciful.

1. Nu‘aym ibn Mas‘ūd al-Ashja‘ī makes a pledge on the following terms.
2. He pledges to provide assistance and strategic counsel [to the Muslims] until the hills of Uḥud remain and there is water in the sea [that is, in perpetuity].
3. And ‘Alī [ibn Abī Ṭālib] wrote [this agreement].

#### **Letter to ‘Amr ibn Murraḥ al-Juhanī<sup>42</sup>**

‘Amr ibn Murraḥ al-Juhanī became a Muslim when he met the Prophet (ﷺ) in Makkah.<sup>43</sup> As the leader of his tribe in Yemen his acceptance of Islam was significant because it occurred while the Muslims had not yet migrated to Madinah. The Prophet (ﷺ) instructed him about proper conduct toward the people, and warned him that having command and authority was not a license to be arrogant, covetous, or oppressive. He was then granted permission to return to his tribe and propagate the message of Islam. Most of his tribesmen accepted Islam. Thereafter, he headed a delegation of his tribesmen to meet the Prophet (ﷺ) in Makkah. They had the honor of meeting the Prophet (ﷺ) who in response to their request, provided instructions about just conduct as well as the fundamental principles of Islam. The Prophet (ﷺ) wrote some instructions down before sending them back with gifts. This document appears in Exhibit 15.

In reviewing the treaties granted to the various tribes and their clans, several objectives become clear: to win their loyalty; to detach them from the Quraysh; and to either bind them into a treaty with the Muslims, and if this was not forthcoming, to secure their neutrality in the Muslims’ principled resistance to Qurayshī excesses and abuses. While the overall objective of bringing these

**Exhibit 15** – Islamic obligations of ‘Amr ibn Murrah’s people.

In the name of Allah, the Mercy-Giving, the Merciful.

1. This document is from Allah, the Most Dignified, who has expressed via His Messenger with validity and truth and constitutes a verbal document enacted with ‘Amr ibn Murrah for Juhaynah ibn Zayd.
3. They [the tribe] have the right to cultivate the land, and use the plains [for produce or to graze their cattle], and use the full stretches of the valleys [from their ascent to their descent], provided that they use its vegetation for feed or however it has to be consumed [that is, this vegetation cannot be neglected], and the water also has to be consumed in the same manner; allow them to drink water wherever they wish.
4. They must pay the *khums* (one-fifth) on the land.
5. When it comes to 40 sheep and a herd of camels [between 10 and 40]; if anyone possesses both, then two heads are due as *zakāh*. If a person only has one or the other, then only one head is due for *zakāh*. And if the person only has animals to till the land, no *zakāh* is due from him;
6. Allah and all the Muslims are witnesses to this treaty.

tribes into the fold of Islam remained paramount, it was not emphasized in the initial stages. We witness that a number of tribes were granted treaties without being coerced into accepting Islam. The purpose was to forestall their support for the Quraysh, the principal enemy of the Muslims against whom all the major battles would be ultimately fought, because it was the Qurayshī influence that was ultimately responsible for impeding Islamic progress in the rest of the Peninsula. Securing the neutrality of these tribes, especially

those residing in the strategic corridor between Madinah and the Red Sea coast, was a primary objective of the noble Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) once he had achieved internal peace and security in Madinah. It was necessary to expand the reach of the Islamic State. Remaining confined to Madinah would have left the Muslims vulnerable. The fight had to be taken to the Quraysh, especially by undermining their economic lifeline: trade. Numerous inducements were offered to these tribes depending on their needs; some were offered help against external aggression; others were promised financial rewards. Some of them were not even expected to help the Muslims, only remain neutral, while others, like Banū Ghifār, were asked to extend support to the Muslims.

The result of these treaties was that the Muslims not only countered the Quraysh from using these tribes against the Islamic State but the Prophet (ﷺ) could count on them to remain neutral, if they were unwilling to help the Muslims directly. In the Battle of Badr for instance, the Muslims did not have to worry about an attack from these tribes in the west. Had the noble Messenger (ﷺ) not entered into treaties with these tribes, there was a significant likelihood that they might have struck Madinah, based on tribal affiliations. Further, most members of these tribes ultimately became Muslims and participated in numerous battles alongside, the most spectacular demonstration of which was during the liberation of Makkah. Thus active diplomacy on the part of the noble Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) helped expand the reach of the Islamic State from Madinah all the way to the port of Yanbu' nearly 100 miles to the west. This was done without killing a single person from any of these tribes. Instead, they all became Muslims and joined the Islamic State as allies and later as active members. These tribes were transformed from living according to a set of local, traditional, and tribal frameworks to a fellowship founded upon broad-minded fairness and universal justice, guaranteed by commitment to Allah (ﷻ) and His Messenger (ﷺ). Within two years of arriving in Madinah, the Islamic State's reach had expanded 100 miles to the west. This was a remarkable achievement by any measure and would serve the Islamic State well in the future.

## Notes and References

- 1 Dr. Muhammad Yasin Mazhar Siddiqui, *Naqoosh Rasool Number 12 (Urdu)*. (Lahore, Pakistan: Idara-e Farooq-e Urdu, 1985), pp. 281–331.
- 2 Ibid.
- 3 Abū Ja'far ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh al-Umam wa-al-Mulūk* (popularly known as *Tareekh-e Tabari*), Volume 1 (Urdu). (Karachi, Pakistan: Nafees Academy, 1987), p. 148 (he quotes al-Wāqidī for this interpretation);  
  
Abū al-Fidā' 'Imād al-Dīn Ismā'īl ibn 'Umar ibn Kathīr, *Al-Bidāyah wa-al-Nihāyah* (Urdu), Volumes 3–4. (Karachi, Pakistan: Nafees Academy, 1987), p. 293 (he cites al-Ṭabarī and al-Wāqidī).
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Dr. Muhammad Yasin Mazhar Siddiqui, *Naqoosh Rasool Number 5 (Urdu)*. (Lahore, Pakistan: Idara-e Farooq-e Urdu, 1985), p. 367.
- 6 Dr. Muḥammad Ḥamīdullāh, *Rasool-e Akram ki Siyasi Zindagi (Urdu)*. (Karachi, Pakistan: Darul Asha'at, 2003), p. 277.
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- 8 Abū 'Abdullāh Muḥammad ibn Sa'd, *Kitāb al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā*, Volumes 1 & 2, 6th edition (Urdu). (Karachi, Pakistan: Nafees Academy, 1987), p. 307.
- 9 Siddiqui, *Naqoosh Rasool Number 12*, pp. 285–86.
- 10 Ḥamīdullāh, *Rasool-e Akram ki Siyasi Zindagi*, p. 277.
- 11 Abū Bakr Muḥammad ibn Ishāq ibn Yāsār and Abū Muḥammad 'Abd al-Malik ibn Hishām, *Seeratun Nabi*, Volume 1, (rendition of Muḥammad ibn Ishāq's original work, Urdu). (Lahore, Pakistan: Idara-e Islamiyyat, 1989), p. 415.
- 12 Ibid.

Waddān and Abwā' are not technically the same place although often referred to as such. Abwā' is on the caravan route while Waddān is not, being about six miles away.

13 Ibid.

14 Ḥamīdullāh, *Rasool-e Akram ki Siyasi Zindagi*, p. 278.

15 Ibid., pp. 277–79.

16 Siddiqui, *Naqoosh Rasool Number 12*, p. 288 (he refers to a citation in *Tareekh-e Yaqoobi (Urdu)* by Aḥmad ibn Abī Ya'qūb ibn Ja'far ibn Wahb ibn Wāḍiḥ).

17 Shibli Naumani, *Seeratun Nabi, Volume 1 (Urdu)*. (Lahore, Pakistan: Nashiran-e Qur'an Limited, undated), p. 316.

18 Ḥamīdullāh, *Rasool-e Akram ki Siyasi Zindagi*, p. 283.

19 Ibid.;

Dr. Muhammad Yasin Mazhar Siddiqui, *Naqoosh Rasool Number 5 (Urdu)*. (Lahore, Pakistan: Idara-e Farooq-e Urdu, 1985), p. 447.

20 Martin Lings, *Muhammad (ﷺ): His Life Based on the Earliest Sources*. (Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia: Islamic Book Trust, 1983), pp. 53–54.

21 Ibn Sa'd, *Kitāb al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā, Volumes 1 & 2*, p. 308;

Ḥamīdullāh, *Rasool-e Akram ki Siyasi Zindagi*, p. 281.

22 Ibn Kathīr, *Al-Bidāyah wa-al-Nihāyah (Urdu), Volume 2*, p. 610–11.

23 Ḥamīdullāh, *Rasool-e Akram ki Siyasi Zindagi*, p. 278–79.

24 Ḥamīdullāh, *Rasool-e Akram ki Siyasi Zindagi*, p. 282;

Abū al-A'lá Mawdūdī, *Tafheem ul-Qur'an, Volume 5*. (Lahore, Pakistan: Maktaba-e Ta'meer-e Insaniyyat, 1974), p. 42.

25 Yaqub Zaki and Zafarul Islam Khan, *Hajj in Focus*. (London, UK: The Open Press, 1984), pp. 73–79.

- 26 Abū al-A'lá Mawdūdī, *Tafheem ul-Qur'an, Volume 2*. (Lahore, Pakistan: Idara Tarjumanul Qur'an, 1994), p. 166.
- 27 Dr. Nisar Ahmed Farooqui, *Naqoosh Rasool Number 2 (Urdu)*. (Lahore, Pakistan: Idara-e Farooqh-e Urdu, 1982), p. 239;
- Siddiqui, *Naqoosh Rasool Number 5*, pp. 455–56;
- Ḥamīdullāh, *Rasool-e Akram ki Siyasi Zindagi*, p. 283.
- 28 Ibid., p. 285.
- 29 Siddiqui, *Naqoosh Rasool Number 5*, p. 456 (originally cited by Ibn Sa'd in *Kitāb al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā*, Volume 5, pp. 247–48).
- 30 Ibid.
- 31 Ḥamīdullāh, *Rasool-e Akram ki Siyasi Zindagi*, p. 286.
- 32 Ibid., p. 285.
- 33 Farooqui, *Naqoosh Rasool Number 2*, p. 244;
- Ḥamīdullāh, *Rasool-e Akram ki Siyasi Zindagi*, p. 284.
- 34 Ibid., p. 283.
- 35 Ibn Sa'd, *Kitāb al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā*, Volumes 1 & 2, p. 48; and requoted by,
- Ḥamīdullāh, *Rasool-e Akram ki Siyasi Zindagi*, pp. 283–84.
- 36 Ibid., p. 285;
- Farooqui, *Naqoosh Rasool Number 2*, p. 244.
- 37 Ḥamīdullāh, *Rasool-e Akram ki Siyasi Zindagi*, p. 285.
- 38 Ibid.
- 39 Ibid., p. 286.
- 40 Abū al-A'lá Mawdūdī, *Tafheem ul-Qur'an, Volume 4*. (Lahore, Pakistan: Maktaba-e Ta'meer-e Insaniyyat, 1974), pp. 61–62 (cited in the introduction to *Sūrah al-Aḥzāb*).

- 41 Ḥamīdullāh, *Rasool-e Akram ki Siyasi Zindagi*, p. 287.
- 42 The Arabic text has been translated by Imam Muḥammad al-ʿĀṣī and Afeef Khan to conform more accurately to the original.  
  
Syed Mahboob Rizvi, *Maktoobaat-e Nabawi, 2nd Edition*. (Lahore, Pakistan: Idara-i Islamiyyat, 1975), pp. 78–80.
- 43 Ibn Kathīr, *Al-Bidāyah wa-al-Nihāyah (Urdu)*, Volume 2, pp. 610–11.





## THE TREATY OF ḤUDAYBĪYAH

### A MANIFEST VICTORY

Verily, [O Muhammad], We have laid open before you a manifest breakthrough, so that Allah might show His forgiveness of all your faults, past as well as future, and [thus] bestow upon you the full measure of His blessings, and guide you on a straight way, and [show] that Allah will support you with [His] exceptional reinforcement.

It is He who from on high has bestowed inner peace upon the hearts of those who made a secure commitment [to Allah], so that — seeing that Allah's are all the forces of the heavens and the earth, and that Allah is All-Knowing, Truly Wise — they might grow yet more firm in their faith; [and] that He might admit the securely committed, both men and women, into gardens through which running waters flow, therein to abide, and that He might efface their [past bad] deeds; and that is, in the sight of Allah, indeed a triumph supreme! (48:1–5).

With these words, Allah (ﷻ) rendered His divine verdict on the Treaty of Ḥudaybiyah declaring it a great victory for Muslims. It dispelled the doubts expressed by some companions who, earlier

during the negotiation of the treaty, had considered its provisions grossly unfair. Without fully comprehending deeper strategies the Prophet (ﷺ) had in mind, the companions could not hide their initial unease with some of the apparently “one-sided” articles of the treaty, especially those related to the handling of defectors from either side. It was well known that Muslims held against their will in Makkah were persecuted and tortured, so this article of the treaty appeared particularly humiliating to many Muslims, who felt that the Prophet (ﷺ) was taking a posture of appeasement with the Quraysh. Before discussing the terms of the treaty, let us review the circumstances that led the Muslims to Ḥudaybiyah.

### **Background**

The Treaty of Ḥudaybiyah can be traced to the outcome of two battles: al-Aḥzāb and Uḥud. The Battle of al-Aḥzāb, also known as al-Khandaq (meaning the Battle of the Confederates or the Battle of the Trench), started in the month of Shawwāl in the 5th year of the Hijrah and lasted for more than a month. This battle was launched when a number of Arabian and Yahūdī tribes conspired to join forces and attack Madinah. Their aim was to wipe out the Muslims completely and forever more.<sup>1</sup> The Battle of al-Aḥzāb itself was the result of the setback the Muslims had suffered in the Battle of Uḥud, exactly two years earlier in Shawwāl, 3AH. Thinking that the Muslims were weakened after Uḥud, the scheming Yahūdī and pathological Arabian tribes were collectively emboldened, feeling that a larger force could deaden the Islamic movement in Madinah once and for all. Barring a few, the vast majority of Arabian tribes were hostile to Islam and the Muslims. They viewed Islam as a viable threat to their *jāhili* practices — idols representing and replacing Allah (ﷻ), pillage and robbery, immorality, outright murder, classism, gender devaluation, and exploitative financial practices. True, the Arabians also had some admirable traits — hospitality, bravery, the honoring of oaths, and loyalty to friends and allies — which the new Islamic message confirmed, but the tribal chiefs feared their economic interests were

being compromised with the growth and stability of Muslim power. The Ka'bah in Makkah housed idols of all the Arabian tribes; major trade fairs, attended by tribes from all parts of Arabia and beyond, were also held in and around Makkah each year. And finally, there was the annual pilgrimage of Hajj. This made the Quraysh not only rich but also enormously influential. Moreover, as one of the largest tribes in Arabia, the Quraysh were also very powerful; few non-Qurayshī tribes wanted to incur their enmity, especially at a time when Muslims were viewed as weak. In order to culturally and politically quarantine the Prophet (ﷺ) and his Muslim followers from the rest of the Peninsula, the Quraysh duly accused the Muslims of breaking away from long-held traditions of Makkah.

The setback the Muslims suffered in Uḥud animated the various tribes, both settled and nomadic, to rise against what they considered to be a vulnerable Madinah. The Najdī tribe of Banū Asad located northeast of Madinah was the first to instigate trouble. When the Prophet (ﷺ) learned about their military preparations, he dispatched an expedition under the command of Abū Salamah to deal with them. Banū Asad were quickly overpowered and subdued. The next challenge came from the Yahūdī tribe of Banū al-Naḍir whose dwellings were located in southeast Madinah. They were bound to a treaty with the Muslims through the Covenant of Madinah, which required all signatories to maintain cordial relations and to support each other in case of external aggression. But far from fulfilling their treaty obligations, these Yahūd plotted to kill the Prophet (ﷺ) at a dinner invitation in Rabī' al-Awwal, 4AH. Given their sordid past history of killing others of Allah's Prophets (ﷺ), they thought that, on this occasion as well, they could get away with such an act of treachery. This led to the siege of their dwellings and finally their expulsion from Madinah. They moved north with a good amount of their voluminous assets; some of them settled in Wādī al-Qurá while others went to Khaybar and Palestine with their coreligionists.

Within months, two clans of another Najdī tribe, Banū Ghaṭafān — Banū Tha'labah and Banū Muḥarrib — started flexing their muscles against the Muslims. The Prophet (ﷺ) personal-

ly led an expedition of 400 fighters and caught them by surprise at Dhāt al-Riqā'. These tribesmen who were more skilled at plundering unprotected caravans were unprepared for a sudden show of organized force and decided to flee into the hills leaving behind their possessions.<sup>2</sup>

Soon thereafter, in Rabī' al-Awwal, 5AH, the Prophet (ﷺ) led an expedition of 1,000 *mujāhids* to deal with the tribes that used to harass and attack caravans at Dūmat al-Jandal. This was an important junction on the borders of Arabia and Syria from where caravans went north to Syria and east to Iraq. Again, the troublesome tribes fled, unable to face-off against the power of the Muslim army. These repeated campaigns established the Muslims' authority and power in a troublesome region. It became clear that no single tribe on its own could take on the rising power of Islam. Such a confrontation would require the collective effort of numerous tribes. It was in this environment that the Yahūdī leaders of Banū al-Naḍir approached their *mushrik* counterparts of Quraysh in Makkah and the surrounding tribes, including Ghaṭafān, to collectively march on Madinah. This joint conspiracy of the confederates is called the Battle of al-Aḥzāb. The principal instigators were the chiefs of the Yahūdī tribes of Banū al-Naḍir and their allies, Banū Wā'il.<sup>3</sup> More than 10,000 soldiers from the Quraysh, Banū al-Naḍir, Banū Wā'il, and Banū Ghaṭafān (especially the Fazārah, Murrah, and Ashja'aḥ clans) were mobilized under the overall command of Abū Sufyān, one of the most influential chiefs of Makkah, to attack Madinah. There were barely 3,000 Muslims, including children, to confront the invaders' onslaught.

On the suggestion of Salmān al-Fārsī (رضي الله عنه), the Prophet (ﷺ) ordered a deep trench to be dug around Madinah to serve as a defensive barrier.<sup>4</sup> The Prophet (ﷺ) personally participated in digging the trench on the north and west of Madinah; the south and east of Madinah were militarily secure due to surrounding hills or dense plantations; attack from these directions would have been difficult for the invaders. The attacking tribes were unfamiliar with the new military tactic — a wide trench blocking their way into Madinah. Used to fighting their foe face-to-face in direct combat and believing

they could win such an engagement because of their vastly greater numbers, the invaders were flustered by the impassable trench.

Several attempts were made to cross the ditch but were repulsed by Muslim archers, whose accurate shooting frustrated *mushrik* efforts to this end. The invaders then laid siege to the city, planning to strangle it by preventing any provisions from getting through. They also sent emissaries to convince Banū Qurayṣah — the last remaining Yahūdī tribe still residing in Madinah — to void its treaty obligations with the Muslims. Initially, Ka'b ibn Usayd, chief of Banū Qurayṣah, refused to violate the treaty, especially when the Muslims had faithfully adhered to it and had given his people fair treatment. But his racist coreligionist, Ḥuyayy ibn Akhṭab, chief of Banū al-Naḍīr, who could not countenance a non-Israeli prophet, was able to convince him that the Muslims would surely lose against a 10,000-strong army. He urged Ka'b to grab this opportunity, annul the treaty, and join the winning side for that would best serve his interests. Ka'b was persuaded and Banū Qurayṣah decided to violate the treaty, thus betraying the Muslims at this most critical juncture.<sup>5</sup>

When the Prophet (ﷺ) became aware that something was afoot between the invaders and Banū Qurayṣah, he sent a reconnaissance team to assess the situation. But being extremely cautious, he advised them not to divulge the information in public if Banū Qurayṣah's treachery was confirmed. He did not want to alarm the Muslims who were already nervous about the multitudes besieging them. The *munāfiqs* inside Madinah were also playing psychological games with the minds of Muslims, telling them that while the Prophet (ﷺ) had been promising them the thrones of Byzantium and Persia, they were now besieged by thousands of hostile troops with no help available from any quarter. They chided the Muslims that following their inevitable defeat against such a large force, their families would fall into the hands of the invaders who will turn them into slaves. This was the excuse the *munāfiqs* advanced to slip away from battle but Allah (ﷻ) exposed their hypocrisy in the following *āyah*,

...And when some of them said, “O you people of Yathrib! You cannot withstand [the enemy] here; hence, go back [to your homes]!” Whereupon a party from among them asked leave of the Prophet, saying, “Behold, our houses are exposed [to attack]!” All the while they were not [really] exposed; they wanted nothing but to flee [from the battlefield] (33:13).

It was a critical time for the Muslims; the siege lasted more than a month and with no provisions coming from anywhere, many Muslims suffered prolonged periods of hunger. To complicate matters, it was a particularly cold time of the year in Madinah. There were frequent skirmishes with the enemy, each side shooting arrows at the other. There were also periodic attempts by the *mushrik* tribesmen to cross the dug-out barrier, but all such incursions failed. On a few occasions, there were direct clashes between the confederates and the Muslims resulting in the death of several prominent Qurayshī chiefs. The threat facing the Muslims was so serious that they had to be vigilant all the time, spending many sleepless nights out in the wintry cold. The siege ended only when a tempestuous windstorm knocked down the invaders’ tents and blew away their provisions. With no end in sight to how long they might have to continue the siege in that cold miserable weather, the invaders’ morale plummeted. Following a particularly harsh night in which strong winds and rains lashed at and drenched them, they fled the battlefield.

It is reported that when the invaders fled, the Prophet (ﷺ) predicted that thereafter, the Quraysh would not be able to attack Madinah again. Instead, the momentum had now shifted to the Muslims. Immediately after the Battle of al-Aḥzāb, the Prophet (ﷺ) dealt with Banū Qurayẓah who had brazenly spurned the Covenant of Madinah by forming an alliance with those who wanted to destroy Madinah. Had it not been for the timely intelligence efforts of Nu‘aym ibn Mas‘ūd — a new convert from the Ashja‘ah tribe, a clan of Ghaṭafān — who managed to sow discord between Quraysh and Ghaṭafān on the one hand, and Banū Qurayẓah on the other, the

Muslims would have suffered grievous harm. Scholars differ about the punishment meted out to Banū Qurayṣah; one group maintains that all their males were executed and the women and children were taken captive;<sup>6</sup> another group of scholars has argued that not all men were executed.<sup>7</sup> The latter group has used *āyāt* of the Qur'an as well as historical precedents to back its position. In any case, Banū Qurayṣah were vanquished soon after the Battle of al-Aḥzāb and the threat they posed to the Muslims in Madinah was neutralized. There were also a number of other campaigns — against Banū Liḥyān, Dhū Qard, and Banū Muṣṭaliq (a clan of Banū Khuṣā'ah) — before the Prophet (ﷺ) was commanded to perform the 'Umrah. Following a vision in his dream that he was entering Makkah wearing the *iḥrām*, performing *ṭawāf* (circumambulation) around the Ka'bah, and sacrificing animals, the Prophet (ﷺ) began preparations to go to Makkah.

Accompanied by 1,400 Muslim men and women — who were unarmed except for a sheathed sword permitted to each pilgrim on the journey to perform the Hajj or 'Umrah — and adorned sacrificial animals, the Prophet (ﷺ) set out for Makkah. As an indication of their peaceful intent, all the men were dressed in *iḥrām*, the two pieces of unsewn cloth worn by pilgrims before they enter Makkah for the performance of this Islamic duty. When the Qurayshī chiefs heard that the Muslims were on their way to Makkah, they called a meeting in Dār al-Nadwah, the Makkans' assembly hall. They appointed a three-member committee comprising 'Ikrimah ibn Abī Jahl (a Makhzūmī), Ṣafwān ibn Umayyah (of the Jumah clan) and Suhayl ibn 'Amr (chief of the 'Āmir clan) — and entrusted them with the task of preventing the Muslims' from entering Makkah.<sup>8</sup> The Quraysh also called for the mobilization of all able-bodied combatants, their own as well as those of their allied tribes, to confront the Muslims. When the Prophet (ﷺ) was informed of Qurayshī preparations and their plans to ambush the Muslim pilgrims, he changed course, taking a more difficult route toward Makkah, in order to avoid contact with an armed contingent of the Quraysh. He finally camped at a place called Ḥudaybiyah.<sup>9</sup>

The Quraysh sent several emissaries to the Prophet (ﷺ), hoping that at least one of them might confirm their allegation that

the Muslims were using *‘umrah* as a ruse to attack Makkah. The Quraysh were determined to prevent the Muslims’ entry because it would be viewed as an insult, but achieving this end was problematic since Arab tradition prevented them from denying anyone — friend or foe — entry for pilgrimage. To forbid entry would lead to grave repercussions, undermining Qurayshī authority and prestige as custodians of the Ka‘bah. Aware that the Muslims were far away from Madinah and were not armed for a fight, it might have been easy for the Makkans and their allied tribes to attack and defeat the Muslims, avenging the humiliation of the Battle of al-Aḥzāb a year earlier. Among those that were sent to meet the Prophet (ﷺ) were Budayl ibn Waraqā’ of Banū Khuẓā‘ah, Mikraz ibn Ḥaḥṣ of the ‘Āmir clan, al-Ḥulays ibn ‘Alqamaḥ of the Aḥābīsh tribe, and ‘Urwaḥ ibn Mas‘ūd al-Thaqafī. They all came away convinced that, contrary to the assertions of the Quraysh, the Prophet (ﷺ) and his companions had not come to fight, only to perform the ‘Umrah. The Qurayshī chiefs stubbornly refused to believe their own emissaries but having no rational reason for their refusal, they found themselves in a quandary.<sup>10</sup>

Following these visits, the Prophet (ﷺ) decided to send his own son-in-law, ‘Uthmān ibn ‘Affān (رضي الله عنه) of the influential ‘Abd al-Shams clan of Banū Umayyah, to convince the Qurayshī chiefs about the Muslims’ peaceful intentions. It was anticipated that ‘Uthmān (رضي الله عنه), who had deep family connections in Makkah, would be received cordially by Quraysh. The Makkans were now in a tough spot for if they prevented the Muslims from performing the ‘Umrah, it would be a violation of the long-established tradition of providing unfettered access to pilgrims during the sacred months of Dhū al-Qa‘dah and Dhū al-Ḥijjah. The Quraysh, especially the powerful ‘Abd al-Shams clan, received ‘Uthmān (رضي الله عنه) warmly and asked him to perform the ‘Umrah, an offer he declined as the Prophet (ﷺ) and other companions were not being given permission to do the same. However, his delay in returning to the Muslim camp quickly led to a rumor that he had been martyred.<sup>11</sup> Thereupon, the Prophet (ﷺ) gathered his companions and took from them an oath to get restitution for the apparent murder of ‘Uthmān (رضي الله عنه). This oath took place



under a tree and is referred to as Bay‘ah al-Riḍwān. The noble Qur’an refers to it in glowing terms, praising the companions who were involved in making the pledge to fight to the death in support of the principle that the Prophet’s (ﷺ) emissaries are not to be killed (48:12–18). Soon thereafter, news came that ‘Uthmān (رضي الله عنه) was alive, and he rejoined the Muslim camp.

Finally, the Quraysh sent Suhayl ibn ‘Amr, chief of the Āmir clan, with specific instructions to tell the Muslims that, in this year, they must go back without performing the ‘Umrah. They feared that if the Muslims were permitted to enter Makkah other tribes might assume that the Quraysh had caved in to pressure; their *jāhili* pride would not countenance such a thought. Suhayl, however, was sent with instructions to negotiate a treaty with the Prophet (ﷺ); the latter, too, was keen to reach an agreement. The noble Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) had set his sights much higher and wanted to pacify the Quraysh with magnanimity so that he would have a free hand in overwhelming the Yahūd of Khaybar who had been instrumental in the build-up to the Battle of al-Aḥzāb. Given the Muslims’ relatively small numbers, it was not possible to deal with the Quraysh and the Yahūd of Khaybar simultaneously. It was necessary to placate one before taking on the other and the Prophet (ﷺ) felt it was more important to countervail Quraysh, hence the decision to go for ‘Umrah and to engage them in negotiations that would result in a treaty.

There was much negotiation between the Prophet (ﷺ) and Suhayl ibn ‘Amr before the terms of the treaty were firm. The Prophet (ﷺ) then called ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib (رضي الله عنه) to write the treaty starting with *Bismillāh al-Raḥmān al-Raḥīm* (in the name of Allah, the Mercy-Giving, the Merciful). Suhayl immediately objected, saying he did not recognize this. Instead, he insisted, the treaty should start with the traditional Arabic style, *Bismika Allāhumma* (starting in your name, O Allah). The Prophet (ﷺ) instructed Imam ‘Alī (رضي الله عنه) to do so. Then he was told to write, “This is a treaty between Muhammad, the Messenger of Allah, and Suhayl ibn ‘Amr.” The latter again objected, arguing that if he recognized Muhammad as the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ), there would be no con-

flict between them. Suhayl insisted that the document should state, “This is a treaty between Muhammad ibn ‘Abdillāh and Suhayl ibn ‘Amr.” The Prophet (ﷺ) accepted this condition as well, although there was much unease among Muslims at the seemingly insulting demands of the Makkan emissary and the Prophet’s (ﷺ) ready acceptance of them.

### Terms of the Treaty

The terms were finally agreed upon and written down (see Exhibit 16). The treaty was written by ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib (رضي الله عنه) and signed by the following witnesses: Abū Bakr, ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn ‘Awf, ‘Abdullāh ibn Suhayl ibn ‘Amr, Sa’d ibn Abī Waqqās, and Maḥmūd ibn Maslamaḥ (رضي الله عنه) on behalf of the Muslims, and Mikraz ibn Ḥaṣṣ and Ḥuwayṭab ibn ‘Abd al-‘Izzā on behalf of the *mushriks*. After the treaty was signed, another issue arose: who would take the signed document? Both sides wanted to keep it but the issue was finally resolved when the Prophet (ﷺ) suggested that an identical copy be prepared and signed by both parties including all the witnesses. The Prophet (ﷺ) retained the original while the identical copy was given to Suhayl ibn ‘Amr.<sup>11</sup>

There were other problems as well. Before the treaty was formally signed, Abū Jundal ibn Suhayl ibn ‘Amr (رضي الله عنه), a Muslim held captive in Makkah, managed to escape and arrived in Ḥudaybiyah. His legs were chained, showing visible signs of torture. His father immediately demanded that he be handed back to him as per the terms of the agreement even though the treaty had not been signed yet. This was a most difficult situation for the Muslims and Abū Jundal’s (رضي الله عنه) plight caused them deep anguish. While the Prophet (ﷺ) was deeply moved by Abū Jundal’s (رضي الله عنه) obvious need to be rescued, he advised him to have patience and that Allah (ﷻ) would find a way out for him soon. The Prophet (ﷺ) also told him that the new treaty obligations required that he (Abū Jundal) be handed back to the Makkans.

The vast majority of the Muslims accompanying the Prophet (ﷺ) were already upset at the apparently humiliating conditions of

**Exhibit 16** – Terms of the Treaty of Ḥudaybiyah.

Starting in your name, O Allah.

This is a treaty between Muhammad ibn ‘Abdillāh and Suhayl ibn ‘Amr.

1. The Muslims will go back to Madinah without performing the ‘Umrah this year [6AH];
2. They will be permitted to enter Makkah next year [7AH] for three days. Each of them will be allowed to bring one sword that must remain sheathed. The people of Makkah will leave the city for the three-day period to avoid any clashes between the two groups;
3. There will be peace between the two sides for a period of 10 years. All tribes are free to ally themselves with whichever party they choose;
4. Any man who escapes from Makkah without the permission of his master or family will be returned forthwith. The Quraysh would not return a person who escapes from Madinah and seeks refuge in Makkah.

the treaty — not being permitted to perform the ‘Umrah while coming so close to Makkah, the Prophet (ﷺ) being identified in the treaty not as the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) but only as the son of ‘Abdullāh, and the handing-over of Muslim escapees to their tormentors. The Abū Jundal (رضي الله عنه) episode further heightened their agony. ‘Umar (رضي الله عنه) was at so much of a loss about the terms of the treaty as they were being negotiated that he went to his friend Abū Bakr (رضي الله عنه) inquiring whether the Prophet (ﷺ) was not the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ). When the latter replied in the affirmative, he then asked, “Are not the Muslims followers of the true *dīn*?” Again, Abū Bakr (رضي الله عنه) replied in the affirmative. “Then why are we accepting

these humiliating conditions from the *mushriks* of Makkah?” he wanted to know. Abū Bakr (ؓ) replied, “We should trust the judgment of the Messenger of Allah and accept what he has done.”

Not satisfied with these answers, ‘Umar (ؓ) then approached the Prophet (ﷺ) directly asking the same questions that he had posed to Abū Bakr (ؓ); he received similar answers. So traumatized were Muslims by what had transpired that when the Prophet (ﷺ) told them to sacrifice their animals and shave their heads, no one moved. This was perhaps the only time in his prophetic mission that the companions did not obey his command instantaneously. He retired to his tent where his wife Umm Salamah (ؓ), who was accompanying him on this mission, suggested that he should perform the sacrifice and once the Muslims saw him, they would follow suit. This is what happened. Upon completing the sacrificial rites, even though they did not perform the ‘Umrah, the Muslims set out on the journey back to Madinah with heavy hearts.

### A Manifest Victory

It was on the way back that the *āyāt* of *Sūrah al-Fath*, giving the noble Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) the glad tidings of a great victory, were revealed. Let us consider how the treaty turned out to be the great victory Allah (ﷻ) declared in the noble Qur’an. For the first time since the Prophet (ﷺ) proclaimed the message of Islam, the Quraysh recognized the Muslims as a distinct political and military constituency, not merely as a rebellious group that had to be taken back by force into the *jāhili* Qurayshī fold. The 10-year truce provided the Muslims an opportunity to be secure from their major adversary. Tribes that were hitherto reluctant to enter into an alliance with the Muslims for fear of antagonizing the Quraysh were now free to do so. In fact, as soon as the Treaty of Ḥudaybiyah was signed, Banū Khuzā‘ah declared their alliance with the Muslims while Banū Bakr, a clan of the Kinānah tribe, joined the Quraysh. Later, Banū Bakr, by attacking Banū Khuzā‘ah and thereby violating the Treaty of Ḥudaybiyah, would provide the Muslims the justification to march on Makkah in Ramaḍān, 8AH, resulting in its liberation.

After neutralizing the Quraysh, the Prophet (ﷺ) was able to turn his undivided attention on the Yahūd of Khaybar and other troublesome tribes north of Madinah. By subduing Khaybar, he effectively crippled the divisive Yahūdī influence throughout the Peninsula. The most significant aspect of the treaty was that it enabled the Muslims to interact freely with non-Muslims, including their own kith and kin from among the Quraysh, influencing them with their noble and upright character, and bringing them into the fold of Islam. Soon after the treaty, a number of prominent Qurayshīs, among them such well-known personalities as Khālīd ibn al-Walīd (a brilliant military tactician of the Makhzūm clan) and ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ (a shrewd diplomat from the Sahnī clan), embraced Islam. The impact on other clans and tribes was equally significant. On the occasion of the treaty, 1,400 persons had accompanied the Prophet (ﷺ) to Ḥudaybiyah; two years later when he marched on Makkah, he had 10,000 men under arms. This phenomenal growth had occurred in a period of less than two years.

The clause in the treaty that had most irked the Muslims — that any person who escaped from Makkah must be handed back while the Quraysh were not obliged to return an escapee from Madinah — also turned in favor of the Muslims. Not long after returning to Madinah, the Prophet (ﷺ) received a letter from Aḥzar ibn ‘Awf of the ‘Abd Manāf clan and Akhnas ibn Sharīq (of Thaḳīf but allied to Zuhrah) pertaining to the escape of ‘Utbaḥ ibn Usayd (Abū Baṣīr), a Muslim held captive in Makkah. They demanded his return according to the terms of the treaty, sending a tribesman of Banū ‘Āmir, Ibn Luayy, accompanied by one of their servants to bring him back. The Prophet (ﷺ) was obliged by the treaty to hand Abū Baṣīr (رضي الله عنه) over to his Makkan escorts. On the way back, Abū Baṣīr managed to kill the tribesman from Banū ‘Āmir while the servant fled in fright. Abū Baṣīr then sought refuge in the hills of Dhū al-Marwaḥ near al-‘Īṣ, the area that the Prophet (ﷺ) had granted to the chief of Banū Juhaynah. From there, Abū Baṣīr started to target the Qurayshī caravans. When news of Abū Baṣīr’s (رضي الله عنه) exploits reached Makkah, other Muslim captives also escaped and joined him in Dhū al-Marwaḥ. Soon, about 70 Muslims made this their

abode and they not only attacked Makkah's caravans acquiring huge amounts of booty, but also exerted pressure by disrupting their trade. The Qurayshī chiefs were so alarmed by this development that they themselves appealed to the Prophet (ﷺ) to abrogate this clause of the treaty.<sup>13</sup>

The Treaty of Ḥudaybiyah not only opened the way for the Muslims to take on the Yahūd of Khaybar but also provided an opportunity for the Prophet (ﷺ) to send letters to the various kings and rulers in the countries surrounding Arabia, inviting them to Islam. We will deal with both aspects separately. First, let us discuss the situation of the Yahūdī tribes residing in Khaybar, located some 100 miles north of Madinah.

### **The Expedition to Khaybar**

Sirāḥ scholars differ on how long the Prophet (ﷺ) stayed in Madinah after his return from Ḥudaybiyah before setting out for Khaybar. Ibn Ishāq narrates that the Prophet (ﷺ) stayed for two months and then set out for Khaybar in the last days of al-Muḥarram of the following year, 7AH.<sup>14</sup> Haykal says that he stayed in Madinah for 15 days, and according to another writer, for one month, but neither gives sources for either assertion.<sup>15</sup> These details are not too important; suffice it to say that it was not long after Ḥudaybiyah that the expedition to Khaybar occurred. Given the military strength of the Jewish tribes, the Prophet (ﷺ) wanted those companions who had demonstrated an unwavering commitment to Allah (ﷻ) and the new *dīn* to participate in this engagement, and thus only took those companions who had accompanied him to Ḥudaybiyah.<sup>16</sup> The Qur'anic revelation also demanded as much,

As soon as you [Muslims] are about to set forth on a war that promises booty, those who stayed behind [from accompanying the Prophet on his journey to 'Umrah that resulted in Ḥudaybiyah] will surely say, "Allow us to go with you," [thus showing that] they would like to alter the Word of Allah. Say [O

Prophet], “By no means shall you go with us; Allah has declared aforetime [to whom all spoils shall belong].” Thereupon they will [surely] answer, “But you begrudge us [our share of booty]!” Rather, they can grasp but so little of the truth! (48:15).

Many bedouins, weak in their commitment to Allah (ﷻ), had not joined the Prophet (ﷺ) when he set out in Dhū al-Qa‘dah of 6AH to perform the ‘Umrah. Clearly, there would be no booty and the bedouins were not interested if there was no hope of acquiring some material gain. Similarly, the *munāfiqs* stayed back because they feared the Prophet (ﷺ) and his companions, by undertaking the journey to Makkah, were heading for certain death at the hands of the Quraysh. Khaybar, conversely, was rich in resources but also a difficult place to liberate given its fortress-like fortifications. Expelling the Yahūd from their reinforced positions behind huge walls was not going to be a walk in the park. Therefore, the Prophet (ﷺ) did not want people interested merely in plunder or those of modest dedication to join him. He wanted only those who were truly committed to the cause of Allah (ﷻ) and would be prepared to lay down their lives if the need arose. Allah (ﷻ) confirmed His Prophet’s (ﷺ) position through a revelation.

Khaybar comprised a number of forts — Nā‘im, the Citadel of Zubayr, and al-Qamūṣ, among others. As he was making military preparations for Khaybar, the Prophet (ﷺ) received news that the Ghaṭafān tribe was planning to send 4,000 fighters in support of their Yahūdī allies in Khaybar. The Prophet (ﷺ) quickly took Ghaṭafān by surprise when he along with a contingent of armed Muslims arrived in their locality, forcing them to use their soldiers to protect their own families instead of augmenting their allies in Khaybar.<sup>17</sup> Haykal says that the Prophet (ﷺ) promised them a share in the booty of Khaybar if Ghaṭafān remained neutral.<sup>18</sup> Being nomadic and largely interested in booty, Ghaṭafān agreed not to help their Yahūdī allies.

The Yahūd in Khaybar were not only well-armed but also well protected in their forts. The Muslims’ zeal and determination,

however, overcame all these obstacles and the forts fell one after another after several days of siege and intense fighting. A number of Yahūdī chiefs were killed in the battle. The Muslims also acquired a large amount of booty including the treasures that Banū al-Naḍīr had brought with them when they were expelled from Madinah in 4AH.

When all the forts fell and the Yahūd were left at the mercy of Muslims, the Prophet (ﷺ) decided not to expel them from their dwellings, as he had done with the Jewish tribes in Madinah. There, the Jewish tribes had repeatedly violated their covenant with the Prophet (ﷺ) and tried at every opportunity to betray the Muslims. Their expulsion from Madinah was necessary to eliminate this threat from within. In Khaybar, on the other hand, the Prophet (ﷺ) accepted their offer to continue to work the land and give half the produce to the Muslims. The Prophet (ﷺ) appointed ‘Abdullāh ibn Rawāḥah (رضي الله عنه) as governor of the region before returning to Madinah. The latter dealt with them in a just manner as the Prophet (ﷺ) had instructed him to do. There were no symbolic burnings of the Torah, for instance — a far cry from the experience of Jews with the Crusades who captured Jerusalem nearly 400 years later in 1099CE. Muslim treatment of the Jews has always been far more just and noble compared to any other group. Jewish treatment of Muslims, on the other hand, as in Palestine today, has been oppressive, cruel, and criminal.

Once the Yahūdī resistance in Khaybar was eradicated, the Prophet (ﷺ) sent word to the Yahūd of Fadak telling them to either surrender their wealth and properties or face Allah’s (ﷻ) verdict. Word of Khaybar’s defeat had already reached the dwellers of Fadak and they readily agreed to surrender half their wealth instead of fighting.<sup>19</sup> The Prophet (ﷺ) returned to Madinah by way of Wādī al-Qurá, which lies between Khaybar and Madinah. While the Yahūd put up some resistance there, it was limited and they agreed to pay the *jizyah* (a tax imposed by the Islamic State on its non-Muslim subjects as a contribution for their protection).<sup>20</sup> Since Yahūdī political power had now been broken in the Arabian Peninsula, the Prophet (ﷺ) permitted them to return to Madinah



to engage in trade. Even so, their resentment of Muslims and mischief making did not end. Zaynab was a Yahūdī woman whose father, al-Ḥārith, and husband, Salām ibn Mishkam, both chiefs of Yahūdī tribes, were killed during the Battle of Khaybar. She plotted to avenge their deaths by serving roasted lamb laced with strong poison to the Prophet (ﷺ) and his companions. She felt that if he was a prophet, he would know the meat was poisoned. One of his companions, who swallowed a morsel, died almost instantly while the Prophet (ﷺ) was informed by the tainted meat itself as he placed a piece in his mouth, whereupon he spit it out immediately.<sup>21</sup> Yet the poison affected his health, resulting in a slowly encroaching illness that ultimately led to his death.

### **Consequences of Ḥudaybiyah**

The Treaty of Ḥudaybiyah not only eliminated the threat of Quraysh but it also opened the way for interaction with other Arabian tribes enabling them to understand and appreciate the lofty principles of Islam. Moreover, it facilitated the elimination of Yahūdī mischief-making that had caused so much anguish to Muslims in Madinah and beyond. The treaty was a master stroke in statesmanship, neutralizing one enemy by binding it to a pact of non-aggression while forcing lesser enemies to deal with Muslim military power individually. The treaty allowed the Muslims to secure the northern region of Arabia from where the Byzantines, one of the superpowers of the time, could have attacked Madinah. The liberation of Khaybar along with the lightning strike on the Ghaṭafān of Najd convinced other smaller tribes that Madinah was now the major power in Arabia and that it was in their best interest to make peace with the Islamic State. This was not long in coming. In the recent past, the Prophet (ﷺ) had to send delegations and *dā'īs* to convey the message of Islam to remote tribes, now these tribes sent in emissaries asking for guidance and alliance with the Muslims. Because of all these benefits that accrued to the Muslims, the Treaty of Ḥudaybiyah was truly a manifest victory, as Allah (ﷻ) had declared soon after it was signed.

It was also after this treaty that the noble Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) sent emissaries to the various rulers of surrounding states, inviting them to Islam. This was part of his mission as Allah's final Messenger (ﷺ) to all mankind (7:158). We will discuss in the following chapter the letters sent to various rulers on the borders of Arabia and how these emissaries and the message they delivered on behalf of the Prophet (ﷺ) were received. What is clear is that the Treaty of Ḥudaybiyah was an important landmark in the progress and consolidation of the power of Islam. As it neutralized one enemy — the Quraysh through diplomacy — it eliminated the power of others through the use of military force — the Ghatafān of Najd and the Jewish tribes of Khaybar. The Prophet's (ﷺ) diplomacy, use of force, and when to apply one or the other offer valuable lessons in statecraft. It is neither the blind use of force nor passive diplomacy that achieves the desired results; their timing is equally important. At Ḥudaybiyah, most of the Prophet's (ﷺ) companions were unable to appreciate the larger picture. He had set out to neutralize the Quraysh just one year after he had inflicted a crushing defeat upon them in the Battle of al-Aḥzāb. The fact that he chose to neutralize the Quraysh before he dealt squarely with the Jews of Khaybar is also instructive.

Yahūdī presence and, therefore, their intrigue and conspiracies, in Madinah had been eliminated a year earlier. On their own the Jews could not take on the power of Islam. They had tried, and failed, despite mobilizing all the tribes in the Arabian Peninsula to attack and defeat the Muslims in Madinah in 5AH. The Treaty of Ḥudaybiyah allowed the Muslims to drive a wedge between the *Yahūdī-mushrik* alliance. By separating the two and simultaneously neutralizing the Quraysh, the Jews were left isolated from their powerful sponsors in the Peninsula. When the treaty was signed, these Jews of Khaybar knew before anyone else that their influence-peddling days were over. In today's world, this means that the State of Israel will be much easier to deal with militarily if it is separated from its imperial American and colonial European sponsors.

Given their pride, the Quraysh were bound to violate the terms of the treaty sooner rather than later. If they did not, it would

still serve the Prophet's (ﷺ) purpose to advance the cause and power of Islam. If the threat from the Yahūd and Ghatafān in the north and northeast were eliminated, it would make it easier to deal with Makkah whenever the need arose. That is precisely how the Prophet (ﷺ) planned his strategy.

By going to Makkah with the specific purpose of performing the 'Umrah and displaying exemplary courage, indeed taking a huge risk by going unarmed, he created a serious dilemma for the Qurayshī chiefs. The journey was undertaken in a sacred month; the Muslims were unarmed and had come with their sacrificial animals. The Quraysh knew that attacking the Muslims in such circumstances would result in a cataclysmic blowback from the rest of Arabia. This the Quraysh could not afford to do. They were forced by the Prophet (ﷺ) to negotiate a treaty whose terms were so generous that the Quraysh could not possibly reject it. The most significant development from the Muslims' point of view was the non-aggression pact for 10 years. Since the Quraysh were the most powerful tribe in Arabia and were also the principal enemies of the Muslims, their neutrality enabled the Prophet (ﷺ) to propagate the message of Islam as well as militarily deal with other troublesome tribes that were both less organized and less powerful than Quraysh. The ultimate liberation of Makkah from the clutches of Quraysh necessitated removing the threat to Madinah's security from other sources. This is what the Treaty of Ḥudaybiyah achieved so brilliantly. By the judicious use of diplomacy and force, the Prophet (ﷺ) systematically and methodically neutralized all of his regional enemies. All these moves were augmented by the total commitment and dedication of his companions who were prepared to make every sacrifice, including that of their own lives, for the sake of Islam and the noble Messenger of Allah (ﷺ).

Before closing out this chapter, one question needs some consideration: why did the Prophet (ﷺ) not try to pursue a treaty with the Quraysh as soon as he arrived in Madinah, like he did with the Covenant of Madinah? Why did he wait six years until after the major battles of Badr, Uhud, and al-Aḥzāb, and scores of skirmishes? This just goes to show that those who amass power and exercise

it with a view to monopolize wealth and oppress — the *mushriks* of Makkah — are not likely to negotiate with anyone based simply on the correctness of his arguments and the justness of his cause. Such power cultures do not respond to what is right, moral, and true; in fact they only respond to power or to the threat of the use of force, especially when they begin to entertain the possibility that they may lose their own power.

This was the situation in Makkah at the time the Treaty of Ḥudaybiyah was compacted. In the short time the Prophet (ﷺ) was in Madinah, the power leverage and anachronistic dominance of the Quraysh in the Peninsula began to recede little by little. They were not able to achieve their stated objective of finishing off the Muslims for good in Uḥud and al-Khandaq; in fact with every successive engagement the Muslims got stronger and the Quraysh became weaker. Also, since the Quraysh were unable to vanquish the upstart Muslims of Madinah, who were generally more lightly equipped, they were not able to inspire obedience through fear in the rest of the onlooking Arabian tribes in the Peninsula. A victory in the Battle of al-Khandaq — when the Muslim resolve outlasted the confederate armies and when the Yahūdī fifth column inside of Madinah was finally neutralized — was the tipping point in the balance of power in the Ḥijāz and beyond. At this point, the Muslim power of Madinah was finally respected by the Quraysh of Makkah.

Never one to compromise on his principles, the Prophet (ﷺ) accepted a peace when it was offered, despite the fact that his own power had now eclipsed that of his most implacable enemies and that he had been persecuted by them for nearly two decades,

**But if they incline to peace, incline you to it as well, and place your trust in Allah: verily, He alone is All-Hearing, All-Knowing! (8:61).**

*And if they [occupants of Madinah] are called to a truce, they shall respond to terms of a fitting truce. And if, on the other hand, they [the kāfirs] call upon the committed Muslims for a truce, the Muslims shall be bound to do so, provided that a*

*truce is not reached with those who maintain a war strategy against Islam as a dīn (Article 45 of the Covenant).*

The Prophet (ﷺ), being a man of principle and conscience, was not one to foment a crisis in order to acquire temporal power; and even though he had the power now, he was not interested in payback. He and the committed Muslims around him remained true to their obligations of the treaty, dissolving it only when the *mushriks* broke from its terms. Would the Quraysh have offered a truce to the Prophet (ﷺ) had he not proved he was a power rival in the field of battle? If that was the case, there would have been no need for him to leave Makkah after 13 years, the majority of which were endured under harassment and intimidation.

Let this be an object lesson for all the members of the Islamic movement: they will only negotiate with you in good faith when you have proven you belong on the table. And this can only happen when the Muslims are ready to give *shahīds* to the cause and fight to the last man. Otherwise “negotiations” just become a litany of concessions, made by the weaker party, that serve to further degrade and humiliate them. The Prophet (ﷺ) was obviously well aware of this dynamic and that is why he built up the Islamic power base, tempered through the fire and anguish of war, before bringing the Muslims to the bargaining table with their adversaries. They were able to agree on a workable truce only because the Muslims were capable of taking them on militarily.

Witness the so-called “peace process” between the Palestinians and the Israelis; so long as the Palestinians, through the “representation” of the Palestinian Authority and the Palestine Liberation Organization, were not a viable military force to be reckoned with, they have inexorably lost more and more of their land and dignity to the Israeli occupation and colonial forces. But recently, with the burgeoning power of Hizbullah and Hamas, leading as it has to the civil uprisings in Tunisia, Egypt, Bahrain, Yemen, Libya, Algeria, Morocco, Oman, and Jordan, the Israelis and their American co-conspirators are crying out about honoring past agreements, even though they had no interest in observing the

same when the Muslims were weak and divided in their nation-state cages. Second, why is America through its European satellites negotiating with the Islamic Republic of Iran over the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT)? Again, precisely because the Iranian Islamic resurgence is strong enough, mentally and militarily, to take on all comers should it come to war. And so it has shown by example — weathering eight years of a “world” war against it and overcoming 30 years of economic sanctions — that the *mushriks* and their *kāfir* institutions (the United Nations, NATO, etc.) will not come willingly to the negotiating table: they have to be brought there, screaming and kicking, by a principled exercise of Islamic power that shows no signs of backing down in a fight.

One final point needs mentioning. The day the fortresses of Khaybar fell, the Muslims who had earlier taken refuge in Abyssinia returned to join the Prophet (ﷺ) in Khaybar. They probably arrived in Madinah first only to discover that the Prophet (ﷺ) was on a military expedition in Khaybar. They must have decided to go straight to Khaybar to meet the noble Messenger of Allah (ﷺ), whom they had not seen for nearly 15 years. Upon seeing his cousin Ja‘far ibn Abī Ṭālib (رضي الله عنه), the Prophet (ﷺ) is reported to have said, “*I do not know what brings greater joy: the conquest of Khaybar or seeing Ja‘far and his companions?*”<sup>22</sup> Their return was the direct result of the Treaty of Ḥudaybiyah, since the treaty had allayed the long-standing conflict with the Quraysh. Besides, soon after returning from Ḥudaybiyah, the Prophet (ﷺ) had sent emissaries with letters to various rulers including another one to the Negus in Abyssinia, requesting him to make arrangements for the return of Muslims to Madinah.

The following year, 2,000 Muslims joined the Prophet (ﷺ) to perform the ‘Umrah that had been denied them the previous year, in which the historic Treaty of Ḥudaybiyah was enacted. Thus was fulfilled the dream of the Prophet (ﷺ) and the sacrifice of animals as he had announced.

## Notes and References

- 1 Abū Bakr Muḥammad ibn Ishāq ibn Yāsār and Abū Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Malik ibn Hishām, *Seeratun Nabi, Volume 2, (rendition of Muḥammad ibn Ishāq’s original work, Urdu)*. (Lahore, Pakistan: Idara-e Islamiyyat, 1989), p. 153.
- 2 Muḥammad Ḥusayn Haykal (Dr. Ismā‘il Rājī al-Fārūqī, translator), *The Life of Muhammad* (ﷺ). (Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia: Islamic Book Trust, 1993), pp. 283–84;

Abū al-A‘lá Mawdūdī, *Tafheem ul-Qur’an, Volume 4*. (Lahore, Pakistan: Maktaba-e Ta’meer-e Insaniyyat, 1974), pp. 54–56;

Abū al-Fidā’ ‘Imād al-Dīn Ismā‘il ibn ‘Umar ibn Kathīr (Trevor Le Gassick, translator), *Al-Siraḥ al-Nabawiyah, Volume 3*. (Reading, UK: Garnet Publishing, 2000), pp. 112–14;

Shibli Naumani, *Seeratun Nabi, Volume 1 (Urdu)*. (Lahore, Pakistan: Nashiran-e Qur’an Limited, undated), pp. 421–23.

- 3 Abū Ja’far ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Tārikh al-Umam wa-al-Mulūk (popularly known as Tareekh-e Tabari), Volumes 1 & 2 (Urdu)*. (Karachi, Pakistan: Nafees Academy, 1987), p. 276;

Ibn Ishāq and Ibn Hishām, *Seeratun Nabi, Volume 2*, p. 153.

- 4 Ibid., al-Ṭabarī, pp. 280–81;

Ibid., Ibn Ishāq and Ibn Hishām, p. 161.

- 5 Ibid., al-Ṭabarī;

Ibid., Ibn Ishāq and Ibn Hishām, p. 158.

- 6 Ibid., al-Ṭabarī, p. 299;

Ibid., Ibn Ishāq and Ibn Hishām, pp. 173–74;

Abū ‘Abdullāh Muḥammad ibn Sa’d, *Kitāb al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā, Volumes 1 & 2, 6th edition (Urdu)*. (Karachi, Pakistan: Nafees Academy, 1987), p. 375.

- 7 Barkat Ahmad, *Muhammad and the Jews — A Re-examination*. (New Delhi, India: Vikas, 1979);

W.N. 'Arafāt, "New light on the story of Banu Qurayza and the Jews of Medina," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*. (London, UK: The Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland, 1976), pp. 100–07.

- 8 Muhammad Ahmed Bashamail, *Ṣulḥ Ḥudaybiyah (Urdu)*. (Karachi, Pakistan: Nafees Academy, 1985), pp.115–20.
- 9 Ibn Ishāq and Ibn Hishām, *Seeratun Nabi, Volume 2*, p. 209;

Al-Ṭabarī, *Tareekh-e Tabari, Volumes 1 & 2*, pp. 323–39;

Ḥudaybiyah is now called Shumaysī. It is situated on the road from Jiddah to Makkah. Non-Muslims are not permitted to get any closer to Makkah than this point, according to an observation by Syed Mahboob Rizvi in his book, *Maktoobaat-e Nabawi*, p. 81.

According to several interpretations of a well-known hadith of the Prophet (ﷺ) narrated by 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās (رضي الله عنه) and recorded by al-Bukhārī, "Akhrijū al-mushrikīn min jazīrah al-'arab: Expel the mushriks from the Arabian Peninsula," the entire Arabian Peninsula is sacred territory and out of bounds for non-Muslims. It must be said, however, that many of these interpretations miss the point because they not only run counter to Qur'anic āyāt, but also because they make a key error in applying the meaning of the Qur'anic and Islamic word, *mushrik*. So far, at least in the knowledge domain of this author, no Islamic scholar has suggested that a man residing in the Peninsula cannot marry and live with a Christian or Jewish woman, and no one has contested the fact that Jewish and Christian women are non-Muslims. So if, according to the interpretation of this hadith, a man who resides in the Peninsula is married to a non-Muslim woman, he would either have to expel her or himself move out of the Peninsula with his family. And this cannot be.

Thus, it obviously means that the way we are understanding the meaning of the word, *mushrik*, is faulty, parochial, and limited. According to Allah's (ﷻ) words in the Qur'an, "And say, 'All praise is due to Allah, who begets no offspring, and has no partner in His dominion, and has no weakness, and therefore no need of any aid,' and [thus] extol His limitless greatness" (17:111), and "...He allots to no one a share in His rule!" (18:26). This means that there is a class of people on earth who not only give man a foothold on the platform of Allah's (ﷻ) divinity, but rationalize that posture on the ground by rivaling and competing with His authority in the area of dominion, rule, and law-making. These are the people who use their power to make *ḥarām* what Allah (ﷻ) has permitted and make *ḥalāl* what Allah (ﷻ) has forbidden. This places the House of Saud, along with



its imperialist and Zionist enablers who have up to 16 military bases in the Holy Land of Arabia, much more in the domain of *shirk* than it does an ordinary Christian, Jew, or other non-Muslim.

Thus under the strictures of this hadith, the ones who ought to be immediately expelled from Arabia are the Saudi royals in their tens of thousands, their imperialist overlords (pseudo-Christians) along with the military instruments of mass destruction they bring to the area, and the Zionist manipulators (crypto-Jews) of both. Their bases ought to be shut down, their front organizations and intelligence operations liquidated, and their palaces razed. To publicly and pompously claim to uphold the Shari'ah by proscribing the building of churches and synagogues, but at the same time to put *masjids* under electronic as well as human surveillance, to allow military bases to be used as staging areas to kill other Muslims, to allow *kāfirs* to spy on and track the movements of Muslims even during the Hajj, to secretly seek advice from Zionist military and intelligence consultants, to allow hordes of Russian and Eastern European (white) prostitutes to parade in and out of princely palaces, and to bring in armies of non-Muslim migrant (slave) workers for manual labor is to heap *nifāq* on top of *shirk*. There is nothing in Allah's (ﷻ) guidance and the model of His Prophet (ﷺ) that on the one hand forbids non-Muslims who do not challenge the authority of the Islamic State, in as much as it represents Allah's (ﷻ) authority on earth, from living in the Peninsula, while on the other hand it permits so-called "Muslims" from doing the same and imposing themselves by force on the Holy Lands, while claiming they are the "Custodians of the Ḥaramayn."

Besides Allah (ﷻ) says in *Sūrah Āl 'Imrān*, **"Behold, the first Temple ever founded for mankind was indeed the one at Bakkah [Makkah]: rich in blessing, and a [source of] guidance to all the worlds, full of clear *āyāt*. [It is] the place whereon Ibrāhīm once stood; and whoever enters it finds security. Hence, pilgrimage to the Temple is a duty due to Allah by all people who are able to embark upon it" (3:96–97).** So by virtue of the use of the words *mankind*, *all the worlds*, and *whoever* in this *āyah*, and the fact that their Prophet (ﷺ) was sent as a mercy to *all* mankind — Muslims and non-Muslims alike — are the Muslims now putting themselves in a position to prevent those escaping oppression, degradation, humiliation, and dispossession from seeking refuge, security, solace, and temporary comfort in Makkah, even if they are non-Muslims? Can anyone experiencing oppression come to America, or Israel, or the UK, or France, et al.? Of course not; they only opportunistically take you if they can use you to promote some kind of partisan agenda or if it helps them pursue a certain "national" interest. In fact, they are responsible for most of the oppression that causes people to leave their homelands in ignominy to begin with. Should there not be at least one place on earth where people — who are chased, hounded, imprisoned, and perhaps tortured because of their principles — can go and feel truly safe?

Makkah was intended to be just that city, and that is why the Prophet (ﷺ) spent the bulk of his mission in liberating it from the encrustations of all forms of *'aṣabiyaḥ* (tribalism, nationalism, racism, sectarianism, exclusivism); and upon his death, he entrusted that mission to the committed Muslims.

10 Ibn Ishāq and Ibn Hishām, *Seeratun Nabi*, Volume 2, p. 211.

11 Ibid., p. 213.

12 Bashamail, *Ṣulḥ Ḥudaybiyah*, pp. 226–27.

13 Ibn Ishāq and Ibn Hishām, *Seeratun Nabi*, Volume 2, pp. 221–22;

Abū al-A'lá Mawdūdī, *Tafheem ul-Qur'an*, Volume 5. (Lahore, Pakistan: Maktaba-e Ta'meer-e Insaniyyat, 1974), pp. 41–42;

Muḥammad al-Āṣī and Zafar Bangash, *The Sirah: A Power Perspective*. (London, UK and Toronto, Canada: The Institute of Contemporary Islamic Thought, 2000), pp. 54–55.

14 Ibn Ishāq and Ibn Hishām, *Seeratun Nabi*, Volume 2, p. 225.

15 Haykal, *The Life of Muhammad* (ﷺ), p. 367.

16 Ibid.;

Martin Lings, *Muhammad* (ﷺ): *His Life Based on the Earliest Sources*. (Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia: Islamic Book Trust, 1983), pp. 262–63.

17 Ibn Ishāq and Ibn Hishām, *Seeratun Nabi*, Volume 2, p. 227.

18 Haykal, *The Life of Muhammad* (ﷺ), p. 368.

19 Ibid., p. 372.

20 Ibid., pp. 371–72.

21 Ibid., p. 273.

22 Ibn Ishāq and Ibn Hishām, *Seeratun Nabi*, Volume 2, p. 247;

Lings, *Muhammad* (ﷺ), p. 270.



## LETTERS TO RULERS, KINGS, AND GOVERNORS OUTSIDE ARABIA

The Treaty of Ḥudaybiyah finally provided the kind of respite the Prophet (ﷺ) was striving for when he migrated to Madinah in order to give the Islamic message a base of operations from where its principles could be projected through the concentrated impact that comes with the power of state instruments. Prior to that, many tribes had been reluctant to embrace Islam for fear of antagonizing the powerful Quraysh. One of the articles in the Treaty of Ḥudaybiyah stipulated that unaffiliated tribes were free to align themselves with either party: the Muslims or the Quraysh without fear of reprisals from the latter. In fact, with a 10-year peace treaty, this opened the way for the Muslims to engage the many tribes in the Ḥijāz and beyond. It also facilitated interaction with rulers, kings, and governors in lands bordering the Arabian Peninsula. The noble Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) used this opportunity to send messages inviting these rulers to Islam.

The six years prior to Ḥudaybiyah had been extremely eventful, first with stabilizing and consolidating the internal situation in Madinah and then in establishing alliances with the numerous

tribes that resided to the west and northwest of Madinah all the way to the Red Sea coast. Despite the Covenant, there still existed two challenges inside of Madinah, one from the Jewish tribes and the other from the *munāfiqs* (dual-loyalists) who pretended to be Muslims but spared no effort to undermine the nascent Islamic State. Then came several major battles — Badr, Uḥud and al-Aḥzāb — interspersed with numerous minor ones that kept the small Muslim community not only busy but also in constant anxiety of enemy attack, especially from the Qurayshī tribal *‘aṣabīyah* that regarded power in the Peninsula to be its birthright and thus had repeatedly attacked the principled power culture emerging in Madinah. The Muslims valiantly defended themselves under extremely difficult circumstances, convincingly defeating their enemy in the very first battle at Badr (Ramaḍān 2AH) despite the latter’s huge numerical advantage, but the threat did not abate until after the Battle of al-Aḥzāb in the year 5AH.

Following the Battle of al-Aḥzāb, the Prophet (ﷺ) predicted that henceforth the Quraysh would not be able to attack Madinah; the initiative now lay with the Muslims. While the internal threats had been neutralized for all practical purposes, this however did not mean that the Quraysh in Makkah had abandoned their animosity toward the Muslims. The other major external threat came from the Jewish tribes of Khaybar, a number of which had been expelled from Madinah and now, seething with anger, were bent on exacting revenge. The Muslims did not have enough manpower to take on both at the same time; one enemy had to be pacified in order to deal with the other, but which one? This is what led to the Treaty of Ḥudaybiyah and an agreement with the Quraysh, stipulating that neither side would attack the other for 10 years. During the time of the Prophet (ﷺ), there were the two empires — the Byzantine and the Persian — on the borders of Arabia and their respective satraps in the Peninsula that also had to be dealt with.

Every prophet is charged with two fundamental tasks as part of his prophetic mission: spreading the message of *dīn* (the *taqwā* of Allah’s (ﷻ) divinity and authority) and striving to implement its teachings in society. Not all Prophets (ﷺ) succeeded in the latter

as the people to whom they were sent refused to accept the message. Some of these rejectionists, like the *kāfirs* from Banū Isrā'īl, murdered their prophets; Prophets Zakarīyā and Yaḥyá (ﷺ), for instance, were both killed by the Yahūd while other prophets were driven out of the locality to which they delivered the Islamic message. There were still other prophets that spent their lifetimes conveying the message but the vast majority of their flock refused to accept it, thus earning Allah's (ﷻ) inevitable punishment as a validation of His *sunan* (social laws),

**[Many] social law applications have come before your time. Go, then, into the [lands of the] world and behold what happened in the end to those who contravened the truth. This [should be] a clear lesson to all men, and a guidance and a warning to those who are conscious of Allah's power (3:137–138).**

**All to that which you conform instead of Him is nothing but [empty] names which you have invented — you and your forefathers — [and] for which Allah has bestowed no warrant from on high. The [prerogative] of rule rests [exclusively] with Allah, [and] He has ordained that you should conform to none but Him: this is the [only] ever-true *dīn*; but most people know it not (12:40).**

Those who denied Allah's (ﷻ) authority in their affairs were struck by calamities and were ultimately destroyed. Of all the Prophets of Allah (ﷺ), the noble Messenger (ﷺ) was the most successful in his mission. He not only succeeded in conveying the message of Islam but also established a model society and government in Madinah that spread within his lifetime to the entire Arabian Peninsula. Those that succeeded him in governance — *al-khilāfah al-rāshidah* — spread the message of Islam to virtually the entire known world at the time. This remarkable transformation occurred because of Islam's powerful message and the noble example of the

Messenger of Allah (ﷺ), both of which combined to inspire people in such a way that they themselves became examples of fortitude, courage, and sacrifice for others.

As a prophet sent to all mankind (7:158), the noble Messenger (ﷺ) did not confine his message only to the people of Arabia. He also sent messages to various rulers inviting them to Islam. This occurred soon after he returned from Ḥudaybiyah. Until then, the Muslims' only other external high-level contact had been with the king of Abyssinia where a number of Muslim men and women had taken refuge after escaping from Makkah in the fifth year of the Prophet's (ﷺ) mission. Most Sirāḥ scholars state that these letters were sent with emissaries in the month of Dhū al-Ḥijjah of 6AH or al-Muḥarram of 7AH.<sup>1</sup> Some orientalists have pointed to discrepancies in the dates given by some Muslim historians about when the letters were sent, using such apparent discrepancies to question whether the letters were sent at all.<sup>2</sup> Dr. Ḥamīdullāh has dealt with these objections in detail and laid to rest all such doubts by pointing out that the confusion regarding apparent dates arose because some early biographers used different starting dates for the Hijrī calendar. Al-Wāqidī, for instance, has used the Hijrah of the Prophet (ﷺ) from Makkah to Madinah, which occurred in the month of Rabī' al-Awwal, as the starting date of the Islamic calendar. However, according to most chroniclers of Islamic history, the accepted start of the Hijrī calendar year is the month of al-Muḥarram. Once this is taken into account, the discrepancy in the dates vanishes.<sup>3</sup>

The fact that a number of original letters has been discovered in the last 50–60 years not only confirms that such letters were sent but that their contents were accurately recorded and transmitted by Muslim historians, even though they had not seen the originals themselves. They relied on the verbal narration of the companions of the Prophet (ﷺ) and their successors. This is a tribute to their memory as well as the great responsibility they assumed in accurately transmitting the words of the Prophet (ﷺ). At least four such letters are extant and preserved in various museums and libraries in the Muslim world, including one in Istanbul's

Topkapi Museum together with a number of other items belonging to the Prophet (ﷺ).<sup>4</sup>

The style and tone of these letters is direct and authoritative, exuding confidence. The noble Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) had already demonstrated his strategic military skills in numerous battles as well as his diplomatic acumen in the many treaties he signed with tribal leaders in the Arabian Peninsula. The most recent of these, before emissaries were dispatched with letters to various rulers, was the Treaty of Ḥudaybiyah, which had very skillfully neutralized the power of the Quraysh and bound them into a non-aggression pact with the Muslims for 10 years.

Before discussing the letters, a slight digression is in order. Within two years of the treaty going into force, Banū Bakr — a clan of the Kinānah tribe that was allied to the Quraysh — violated its treaty obligations by attacking and killing a member of Banū Ka'b — a clan of the Muslim ally Banū Khuzā'ah. Compounding the crime, they killed the clan member within the boundaries of the Ḥaram, considered a major sin even by the *mushrik* Quraysh. The murder was perpetrated with the support of some men of the Quraysh who took part in the attack under the cover of darkness.<sup>5</sup> This was a clear breach of the Treaty of Ḥudaybiyah; the Muslims were obliged by the treaty to come to their allies' aid when the leaders of Banū Khuzā'ah rushed to the Prophet (ﷺ) in Madinah seeking his appropriate and just response. Instead of immediately marching on Makkah, the Prophet (ﷺ) sent a message to the Quraysh offering them three options:

1. Banū Bakr should pay financial compensation (*diyyah*) to the bereaved members of Banū Ka'b; or,
2. if they refuse, the Quraysh should withdraw support from them so that the Muslims can deal with them directly; or
3. if neither of these two options is acceptable, then the Quraysh should consider the treaty to be null and void, since the Muslims are bound by their treaty obligations to help their ally.<sup>6</sup>

In their eagerness to show that they were the only bona fide power in Arabia, the Quraysh arrogantly went for the third option

in the absence of Abū Sufyān, who was away from Makkah when the incident occurred. During the exchanges that followed between the Quraysh and the Prophet (ﷺ), Abū Sufyān was still away. When he returned to Makkah and was informed of the incident, he quickly realized the mistake his deputies had made, but by then it was too late for him to react in a more deceptive way and thus to reverse the tide of history. This episode, however, occurred two years after the Treaty of Ḥudaybiyah had been signed and led to the Muslims' march on Makkah, liberating it in the month of Ramaḍān, 8AH.

With the Muslims now relieved of worries about a possible attack by the Quraysh on Madinah following the Treaty of Ḥudaybiyah, the Prophet (ﷺ) was able to deal with the troublesome tribes to the north and northeast. Even before he set out to deal with them, he sent letters to the various rulers inviting them to Islam in conformity with the Qur'anic *āyāt* that he is the Messenger (ﷺ) for all mankind (7:158, 25:01, 34:28, 21:107). The Qur'an narrates the stories of previous prophets that approached kings or queens conveying to them the message of *tawḥīd* — the Oneness of Allah (ﷻ).<sup>7</sup> In the earlier cases, each prophet dealt with only one ruler and that too, verbally; only in the case of Prophet Sulaymān (ﷺ) does the Qur'an say that he sent a letter to Bilqīs, the Queen of Sheba, inviting her to conform to the One God, Allah (ﷻ). The noble Messenger of Allah (ﷺ), however, sent his emissaries to several kings simultaneously inviting them all to Islam. These included the Persian and Byzantine emperors as well as their representatives in the Arabian Peninsula such as the Bishop of Alexandria, and the governors of Damascus, Bahrain, Oman, and Yemen. Not only are the contents of these letters similar, each of them has the Prophetic Seal at the end. The seal was prepared at the advice of the Prophet's (ﷺ) companions who said that rulers did not accept letters without the sender's seal. The seal was round, one inch in diameter and made in the form of a silver ring (an image of it is given on p. 43).



## Two Superpowers

During the Prophet's (ﷺ) time, there were two superpowers in the world: the Byzantine and the Persian empires. Competing for control and dominion, they were bitter rivals. The Byzantines and their allies controlled Constantinople (Istanbul today), Syria, Palestine, Yemen, and Abyssinia while the Persians held sway over Iraq, Oman, Bahrain, and Yamāmah in addition to their Persian empire that extended north and east into what is present-day Central Asia. Fighting between the two superpowers had started eight years before the Prophet (ﷺ) received the first revelation. In that year, there was a rebellion against the Byzantine emperor Maurice (his official title was *Caesar*, meaning *emperor*), led by a person named Phocas. He not only killed the emperor but also his wife and children, hanging their bodies in a public display in Constantinople. The Persian emperor Chosroe (also Latinized as *Khusroe*) Pervez considered Maurice a great benefactor because it was through his help that he had ascended the throne of Persia. Chosroe used the murder of Maurice as a pretext to declare war on Byzantium in the year 603CE.

Chosroe's forces made rapid progress against Phocas pushing him out of Asia Minor as well as parts of Syria. Alarmed by these developments, the ruling elites in Byzantium approached the Byzantine governor of Africa seeking his help to ward off the Persian threat by tackling Phocas directly. The governor sent his son, Heraclius, at the head of a large fleet that arrived in Constantinople and deposed Phocas, murdering him and his family in the same manner that the latter had done with Maurice. Phocas became Caesar in the year 610CE, the year that the noble Messenger (ﷺ) started his prophetic mission. Phocas' removal from power should have eliminated the reason for Chosroe's angst but it did not; he now turned this into a battle between Zoroastrianism (the religion he claimed to follow) and Christianity. Given that Christianity was riddled with sectarianism — Rome had ex-communicated the Nesturians and Jacobites, for instance — the oppressed Christian sects readily joined forces with Chosroe against Byzantium. So did the Jews who had been expelled from Palestine by the Romans in 135CE. Chosroe's

forces continued to overtake the Byzantines, eventually occupying Damascus, then capturing Jerusalem in 614CE, and finally destroying the Church of the Holy Sepulcher. The cross on which they believed Prophet Jesus (ﷺ) was crucified was kept there; this was taken away to Madāyin, the Persian capital. The Persians then moved into Jordan and occupied the rest of Palestine. From there they entered the Sinai Peninsula reaching all the way to the border of Egypt.<sup>8</sup>

The people of Makkah received news of these developments with great interest and delight. While the *mushriks* sided with the animistic Zoroastrians, Muslim sympathies naturally went with the Byzantines whom they considered to be People of the Book, even if they had distorted their faith commitment to the One God. Interestingly, the Jews and the Nesturian and Jacobite Christians also came out supporting the Zoroastrians — the first because they were persecuted by the Romans and expelled from Palestine, and the latter two because they had been declared heretics by the Roman Catholic Church. When Chosroe's forces captured Jerusalem, the Makkan *mushriks* ridiculed the Muslims demanding to know why God had not protected the Christians from the onslaught of the apparent *kāfirs*. It was in these circumstances that several *āyāt* of *Sūrah al-Rūm*, dealing with this issue, were revealed,

**Alif. Lām. Mīm.** Defeated have been the Byzantines in the lands close by; yet it is they who, notwithstanding this their defeat, shall be victorious within a few years: [for] with Allah rests all power of decision, first and last. And on that day will the securely committed Muslims [too, have cause to] rejoice in Allah's victory; [for] He gives victory to whomever He wills, since He alone is Almighty, a Dispenser of grace. [This is] Allah's promise. Never does Allah fail to fulfill His promise, but most people know [it] not (30:1–6).

These *āyāt* came down in the fifth year of the Prophet's (ﷺ) mission in Makkah at a time when the Muslims were suffering great hardships. Some of them were forced to migrate to Abyssinia to escape

the horrible treatment. While all this was taking place, the Persians defeated the Byzantines not only in Palestine but also captured Jerusalem and destroyed the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, the holiest of Christian ritual sites.

It is not difficult to imagine the incredulity with which the *mushriks* of Makkah must have reacted to these *āyāt* that not only predicted the Byzantines' victory over their Persian foes but also gave the Muslims the glad tidings that they too would have a great victory. This was greeted with much derision by the *mushriks*. Given the plight of the Muslims at the time, their cynicism appeared justified but the victory came at the Battle of Badr (17th Ramaḍān 2AH) when 313 lightly armed Muslims defeated the heavily armed Qurayshī force of more than 1,000 and killed some of their leading figures (8:7–19).<sup>9</sup>

Ibn Sa'd gives the names of the rulers to whom the Prophet (ﷺ) sent messages and also the names of the individuals who delivered them.<sup>10</sup> All historians refer to 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās (رضي الله عنه), the Prophet's (ﷺ) cousin, as the primary narrator of this information. Al-Ṭabarī says that three of the emissaries were the Prophet's (ﷺ) companions.<sup>11</sup> Does this mean that the others were not? If so, had they not yet accepted Islam or did they not live in Madinah and had, therefore, not seen the Prophet (ﷺ)? He does not explain but in the paragraphs that immediately follow, he names other individuals — al-'Alā' ibn al-Ḥaḍramī and 'Amr ibn al-'Āṣ — who were dispatched to the rulers of Bahrain and Oman respectively.<sup>12</sup> The six individuals named by al-Ṭabarī are,

1. 'Amr ibn Umayyāḥ al-Ḍamrī, sent to the Negus, King of Abyssinia;
2. Diḥyāḥ ibn Khalifāḥ al-Kalbī, sent to Heraclius, Emperor of Byzantium;
3. Shujā' ibn Wahb, sent to al-Ḥārith ibn Abī Shimr al-Ghassānī, Governor of Ghassān;
4. 'Abdullāh ibn Ḥudhayfāḥ al-Sahmī, sent to Chosroe, King of Persia;
5. Salīṭāḥ ibn 'Amr al-'Āmirī, sent to Hawzah ibn 'Alī al-Ḥanafī, Governor of Yamāmah; and

6. Ḥaṭīb ibn Abī Balta‘ah, sent to Muqawqis,  
Governor of Alexandria.

There were two rules of diplomacy the noble Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) observed with great regularity: (1) every emissary sent to a foreign land could converse in the language of those people; and (2) the emissary was sent bearing gifts together with a letter, regardless of the recipient's response to the message of Islam. These constitute the best traditions of diplomacy and the fact that the noble Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) observed them at a time when there were not many literate people in the Arabian Peninsula reflects his great care for proper etiquette and adherence to protocol — a forerunning example that has since become the norm in international diplomacy. There were several individuals, among them Zayd ibn Thābit in Madinah and ‘Abdullāh ibn Arqam (رضي الله عنه) — he embraced Islam at the time of the liberation of Makkah — that were tasked with writing the revelations as they were received as well as other correspondence of the noble Messenger (ﷺ). They were also instructed by the noble Messenger (ﷺ) to learn different languages.<sup>13</sup>

Ibn Sa’d says that ‘Amr ibn Umayyah al-Ḍamrī was the first person dispatched to the Negus, delivering two letters, one inviting him to Islam and the other instructing him to perform the *nikāḥ* of Umm Ḥabībah (رضي الله عنها) to the Prophet (ﷺ); the letters also instructed the Negus to make arrangements for the Muslims’ return from Abyssinia. Umm Ḥabībah, the daughter of Abū Sufyān, had immigrated to Abyssinia with her husband, ‘Ubaydullāh ibn Jaḥsh, and other Muslims in the fifth year of the Prophet’s (ﷺ) mission in Makkah. ‘Ubaydullah converted to Christianity in Abyssinia and died there a few years later, leaving behind a young Muslim widow. According to the Prophet’s (ﷺ) instructions, the Negus performed Umm Ḥabībah’s *nikāḥ* and paid 400 *dīnārs* as *mahr* on his behalf. It is reported that in making preparations for the Muslims’ return to Madinah, the Negus arranged for two boats in which the Muslims and some Abyssinians including the Negus’s son Arhā were sent across the Red Sea.<sup>14</sup>

Before handing him the letters, ‘Amr ibn Umayyah al-Ḍamrī addressed the king in the following words,

Honorable King!

It is my duty to deliver the message of truth to you and your duty to hear it. For quite some time now, your kindness and affection toward us has been such that we consider you a part of us. We have so much confidence in you that we do not consider you separate from us in any way.

The birth of Prophet Adam (ﷺ) is proof among us. Just as the Authority created Adam (ﷺ) without parents, the same Authority also created Prophet Jesus (ﷺ) without a father. Between us the biggest proof is the Bible itself.

Acceptance of the prophethood of Muhammad (ﷺ) is the source of all blessings and greatness.

Honorable King!

If you do not accept his prophethood it will prove as detrimental to you as was the rejection of Prophet Jesus (ﷺ) to the Jews.

Like me, a number of individuals have been dispatched to various kings inviting them to Islam. But the expectations that the noble Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) has from you are much higher than those from others.

We are confident that in view of your past noble deeds, you will have hopes of even greater reward from Allah (ﷻ) in the future.<sup>15</sup>

When ‘Amr concluded his remarks, the Negus, who had already been impressed by the eloquence and sincerity of Ja‘far ibn Abī Ṭālib (رضي الله عنه) and the upright conduct of his fellow Muslims throughout their stay in Abyssinia, said to him,

‘Amr, By Allah (ﷻ), I bear witness that Muhammad (ﷺ) is the same noble messenger awaited by both the Jews

and us. Without doubt, just as Prophet Mūsá (ﷺ) had predicted the advent of Prophet Jesus (ﷺ), the same way Prophet Jesus (ﷺ) had predicted the advent of the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ). There is no difference between the two.

In this regard, for me receiving the news [about the Prophet] and actually seeing him are the same. Regarding the people of Abyssinia, my followers are small in number at present, so please give me some time to gather more supporters and prepare the ground for their acceptance of Islam.<sup>16</sup>

Thereupon, the Negus descended from the throne and as a mark of respect, lifted the Prophet's (ﷺ) letter and touched his eyes with it declaring his *shahādah*. He also wrote to the Prophet (ﷺ) confirming that he had embraced Islam at the hands of Ja'far ibn Abī Ṭālib (رضي الله عنه).<sup>17</sup> As discussed earlier in Chapter 1 of this book, the Negus had accepted Islam much earlier, but given his precarious position in the kingdom and the intrigues of the religious establishment, he did not declare it publicly. This was long before the letters delivered to him by 'Amr ibn Umayyah al-Ḍamrī in al-Muḥarram of 7AH. One of the original letters sent by the Prophet (ﷺ) has been discovered and is still extant (for details, see Chapter 1). What the Negus wrote in response to the Prophet's (ﷺ) letter is given in Exhibit 17.

The Negus then placed the two letters in a box made of elephant tusk and declared that as long as these remained in Abyssinia no calamity would befall its people. He then bid farewell to his Muslim guests. Al-Ṭabarī states that on the way across the Red Sea, one of the boats capsized and all its occupants drowned.<sup>18</sup> However, while he relates the account given by Umm Ḥabībah (رضي الله عنها) about how her marriage to the Prophet (ﷺ) took place and her journey back to Madinah, he does not mention anything about the boat capsizing in her account of what happened;<sup>19</sup> Ibn Sa'd is also silent on this point.<sup>20</sup> There are other narrations, quoted by Dr. Ḥamīdullāh, which say that the Negus's son as well as a number of other Abyssinians arrived in Madinah and that even if one of the boats

**Exhibit 17** – Letter from the Negus in response to the Prophet's (ﷺ) invitation to Islam, 7AH.

To Muhammad, the noble Messenger of Allah (ﷺ), from Aṣḥam, the Negus.

*Al-salām ‘alaykum*, O Prophet of Allah.

There is no worthy divinity and authority except Allah (ﷻ). He is the One who has shown me the way to Islam and guided me to the right path.

O Prophet of Allah (ﷺ), I have had the honor of seeing your letter. I swear by Allah (ﷻ), the Master of the Universe, that there is absolutely nothing more about Prophet Jesus (ﷺ) than what you have said about him in your letter.

We have understood well what you have stated in your letter to me. Your cousin [Ja‘far ibn Abī Ṭālib] and his companions are very close to us.

I bear witness that you are the Messenger of Allah and I have pledged my allegiance to Allah (ﷻ) at the hand of your cousin and I have entered the fold of Islam.

O Messenger of Allah. I am sending my son Arhā to you. If you command me to do so, I am prepared to come personally. And may Allah's (ﷻ) peace, mercy, and blessings be upon you and yours.<sup>21</sup>

had capsized, clearly Arhā was not in that one. The Prophet (ﷺ) asked ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib (رضي الله عنه) to host Arhā and look after him. He lived with Imam ‘Alī throughout his stay in Madinah. The Prophet (ﷺ) personally looked after the Abyssinians to reciprocate the kindness extended to the Muslims during their long exile in the African country. Dr. Ḥamīdullāh quotes from Samhūdī's *History of Madinah* that while Arhā went back to Abyssinia bearing gifts from the

Prophet (ﷺ), he was so impressed by the simplicity of the Muslims, especially his close links with Imam ‘Alī (عليه السلام) who must have inspired him with his wisdom and *taqwá*, that he refused to become the king after the death of his father.<sup>22</sup> Both Imams al-Bukhārī and Muslim state in their Hadith compilations that when the Negus died, the Prophet (ﷺ) offered *ṣalāḥ al-janāzah* (funeral prayers) in absentia for him. The Prophet (ﷺ) then sent a letter to his successor, according to a hadith in Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, inviting him to Islam but it is not known whether the latter accepted it.<sup>23</sup>

### The Prophet’s (ﷺ) Letter to the New Abyssinian King

The letter, shown in Exhibit 18, was conveyed to the new king by one of the Prophet’s (ﷺ) emissaries, possibly ‘Amr ibn Umayyaḥ al-Ḍamrī, who was familiar with the culture and language of the Abyssinians. Two points need elaboration. Firstly, in quoting the letter, Dr. Ḥamidullāh does not start with “*In the name of Allah.*” Perhaps, this might be an accidental omission because the noble Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) started all his correspondence with this invocation. Second, the letter is addressed to the Negus Aṣḥam. This was the name of the first Abyssinian king who had already embraced Islam and confirmed it as such in a letter to the noble Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) in which he also said he was sending his son to accompany the Muslims as they left Abyssinia. Was Aṣḥam the name of the successor king as well, perhaps being part of his title as king? Historians have not clarified this point although as stated above, it is generally believed that the new Abyssinian king did not accept Islam. The most likely explanation is that the second king was also named Aṣḥam and that most probably, he did not accept Islam; otherwise Muslim historians would have relayed some information about him in their history books.

### The Prophet’s (ﷺ) Letter to Heraclius, Emperor of Byzantium

This letter to the Byzantine emperor Heraclius was delivered by Diḥyaḥ ibn Khalīfah al-Kalbī (رضي الله عنه). Ibn Sa’d states that the Prophet



**Exhibit 18** – The Prophet’s (ﷺ) letter to the new Abyssinian king.

In the name of Allah, the Mercy-Giving, the Merciful.

This is a letter from Muhammad, the Messenger of Allah, to the ruler of Abyssinia, the Negus Aṣḥam. Peace and protection is for that person who follows the path of guidance and believes in Allah (ﷻ) and His Messenger.

I bear witness that there is no worthy deity/authority except Allah. He is the One and only and has no partners. He neither has a wife nor any children, and that Muhammad is His servant and Messenger.

I invite you to Islam because I am the Messenger [of Allah]. Accept Islam and you will be safe. **“O followers of earlier revelation! Come unto that tenet which we and you hold in common: that we shall conform unto none but Allah, and that we shall not ascribe divinity to any beside Him, and that we shall not take human beings for our lords beside Allah.”** [3:64]. If you reject this message, then know that the sins of your Christian subjects will also be upon your head [meaning, your responsibility].<sup>24</sup>



(ﷺ) had instructed Dihyāh to deliver the letter intended for Heraclius to his governor in Buṣṣā and ask him to convey it to the emperor.<sup>25</sup> Dr. Ḥamīdullāh quotes al-Bukhārī as confirming this sequence adding that Heraclius was in Ḥimṣ (Syria) and was on his

way to Aelia (Jerusalem) because the Byzantines had already defeated the Persians at Nineveh (Iraq) in Sha‘bān 6AH. Heraclius was retrieving the cross that had been carted off by the latter to Madāyin;<sup>26</sup> he had made a vow that if he were successful in defeating the Persians, he would walk barefoot to Jerusalem to reinstate the cross in the Holy Sepulcher. Ibn Sa‘d deals briefly with the Prophet’s (ﷺ) letter to the Byzantine emperor stating that upon receiving it, Heraclius assembled his priests and advisors to read to them the letter and then asked them to accept Islam. However, upon learning of the letter’s contents, the priests became visibly upset. Fearful of losing his throne, Heraclius immediately abandoned his original suggestion.<sup>27</sup> Al-Ṭabarī gives more details about the letter,<sup>28</sup> while Ibn Kathīr has given extensive narrations from numerous scholars of both Hadith (Imam al-Bukhārī) and *Sīrah* literature (al-Zuhrī, al-Bayhaqī, and al-Wāqidī), and even mentions that the Byzantine emperor was a soothsayer who had the ability to read the stars.<sup>29</sup>

Ibn Kathīr narrates that one night Heraclius had a dream in which he saw that the *malik al-khitān* (king of the circumcised) will be ascendant. Alarmed by this, he called his advisors to consult them. They told him that the only circumcised people they knew were the Jews and if he so wished, they would have all of them within his kingdom rounded up and executed. While these discussions were going on, the governor of Buṣrā sent an Arab to the king’s court. They inquired of him about events in Arabia and he confirmed that a prophet had emerged there. Heraclius immediately ordered his advisors to find someone from the Prophet’s (ﷺ) tribe so that he could be questioned.

Abū Sufyān and a group of Qurayshī merchants were in Ghazzaḥ at the time. They were summoned by the king to Jerusalem and interrogated about the Prophet (ﷺ). Through a chain of narrators going back to ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Abbās (رضي الله عنه), al-Zuhrī quotes Abū Sufyān who confirmed to Heraclius the following points about the Prophet (ﷺ): he never tells lies; he is from a pure and high lineage; his followers are from among the poor and destitute who never abandon their commitment to Allah (ﷻ) once they make it, instead

their numbers are increasing; and that in various battles sometimes they win and at others their enemies, the Makkan *mushriks* do. Upon hearing this, Heraclius said to Abū Sufyān, “If what you have said is true, then he will conquer the land beneath these feet of mine. I wish I were with him so that I could wash his feet.”<sup>30</sup>

Upon receiving the Prophet’s (ﷺ) letter from his governor in Buṣṣā, Heraclius read it carefully but did not divulge its contents to his priests and advisors. Uncertain of their reaction, he took precautions to protect himself. Thereafter, he gave his opinion about it. The contents of the letter are given in Exhibit 19 and the actual letter is displayed in Exhibit 19a.

Ibn Kathīr gives two different versions of how the contents of the letter were declared to the Byzantines. In the first, he writes that Heraclius announced to the assembled notables in Jerusalem,

Fellow Byzantines, I have received a message from Aḥmad! He is, I swear by God, the Prophet we were awaiting and about whom there is information in our book. We recognize him by his qualities and the time [in which he would announce his revelation]. Accept him and follow him and you will be safe both on earth and in the hereafter.

There was an immediate uproar and they all rushed toward Heraclius’ chamber but found the doors locked so they stormed out in fury. Fearing that they might create trouble for him, Heraclius called them back and told them he was merely testing their faith by what he had said. He further stated he was pleased with their strong commitment to their own faith. Thereupon they all bowed to him in respect.<sup>31</sup>

In another version, Ibn Kathīr narrates that upon receiving the news, Heraclius wrote to a colleague in Rome asking him about the advent of a new prophet. Al-Ṭabarī is more specific saying that he wrote to the Pope in Rome who was well-versed in the Hebrew Bible.<sup>33</sup> Then he left Jerusalem for Ḥimṣ where he received the reply from Rome confirming that the new prophet was indeed gen-

### Exhibit 19 – The Prophet’s (ﷺ) letter to Heraclius.

In the name of Allah, the Mercy-Giving, the Merciful.

From Muhammad, the servant of Allah (ﷺ) and His Messenger, to Heraclius, the leader of the Byzantines. Peace be upon him who follows the guidance.

I invite you to Islam; accept it and you will be safe and Allah (ﷻ) will give you a double reward. If you turn away, then yours will be the sin of *al-arīsiyūn* [the peasants].

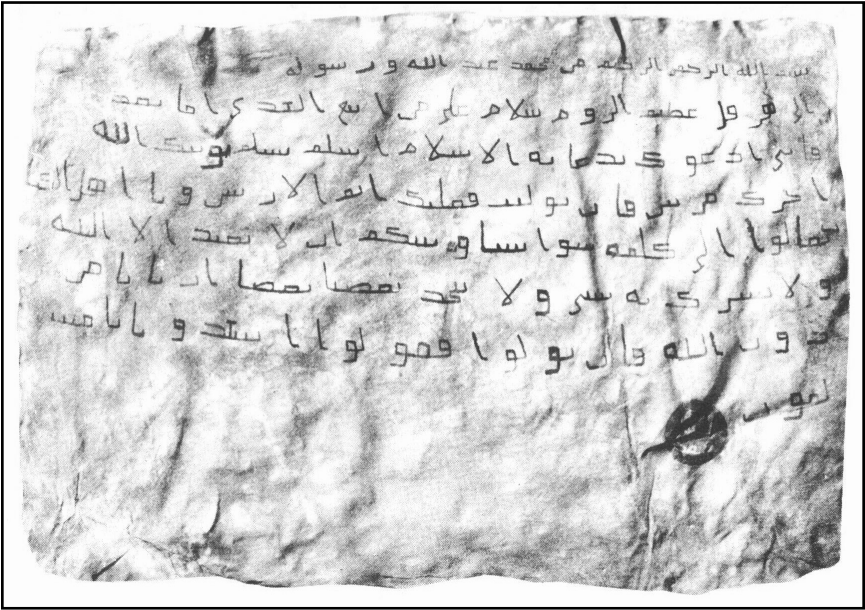
**“O followers of earlier revelation! Come unto that tenet which we and you hold in common: that we shall conform unto none but Allah, and that we shall not ascribe divinity to any beside Him, and that we shall not take human beings for our lords beside Allah.’ And if they turn away, then say, ‘Bear witness that it is we who have surrendered ourselves to Him’” [3:64].<sup>32</sup>**



uine and that Heraclius should follow him. Again, the story narrates how the notables of the city were assembled, how they reacted to Heraclius’ statement, and how the same sequence of events, mentioned above, transpired.<sup>34</sup>

In yet another version based on al-Ṭabarī’s work, Ibn Kathīr narrates that Dihyāh ibn Khalīfah al-Kalbī (رضي الله عنه) himself delivered the letter to Heraclius. While personally accepting that he was indeed the awaited prophet as mentioned in their books, Heraclius feared the reaction of the Byzantine priests and noblemen. He advised Dihyāh to see Bishop Saghatir and ask for his opinion about

**Exhibit 19a** – The actual letter sent to Heraclius.



the Prophet (ﷺ), “The Byzantines actually consider him more highly and more persuasive than myself. See what he tells you.”<sup>35</sup>

Diḥyah did as advised by Heraclius. When he talked to Bishop Saghatir, the latter a spiritual man and well acquainted with scripture, immediately recognized the significance of the message and accepted the Prophet (ﷺ) as the true messenger mentioned in their scriptures. He then put on his ceremonial white robes and went out to address the Byzantine nobles in the church. He told them about the letter from “Aḥmad,” said that he was indeed the awaited prophet as mentioned in their books, and then publicly took the *shahādah*, “I bear witness that there is no deity/authority but Allah and that Aḥmad is His servant and Messenger.” So infuriated were the Byzantine priests at hearing this that they attacked the bishop and killed him.<sup>36</sup> Al-Ṭabarī states that before leaving al-Shām,<sup>37</sup> Heraclius made another attempt to reason with the Byzantine elites about accepting the Prophet (ﷺ). If they remained recalcitrant, he

suggested that they either pay the *jizyah* or hand over Syria to him. He feared that unless the Byzantines agreed to this, they would lose everything. The Byzantine elites were not prepared to hear any of this and Heraclius left for Constantinople a dejected man convinced that this would turn out to be the last time he would ever glance at Syria.<sup>38</sup> His fears were validated within a few years when the Muslims drove out the Byzantine military regiments and plutocratic administrators not only from all of Arabia but also from Syria, Palestine, and the lands beyond.

A number of Muslim scholars — among them the 6th-century Hijrī historian and *muḥaddith*, Abū al-Qāsim ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn ‘Abdillāh al-Suhaylī (author of *Rawḍ al-Anf*), and Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad al-Qaṣṭalānī (author of *Sharḥ al-Bukhārī*) — have stated that until the end of the 7th century AH (13th century CE), the Prophet’s (ﷺ) letter to Heraclius was in the possession of King Alfonso of Spain. Preserved in a gold box, it was shown to Morocco’s ambassador, Sayf al-Dīn Qalbīḥ, when he visited Spain as a representative of King Maṣṣūr Ṣāliḥī.<sup>39</sup> According to newspaper reports in the mid-1950s, the letter had found its way from Spain to Makkah. How it reached there is not explained but it ended up in the possession of King ‘Abdullāh of Jordan, the great great grandfather of the present King Abdullah in Jordan. The Hashemite rulers of Jordan trace their ancestry to the Prophet (ﷺ). He gave it to one of his sisters who decided to sell it! Shaykh Zayd ibn Sulṭān Āl Nahyān of Abu Dhabi in the United Arab Emirates offered to purchase it for £2 million sterling.<sup>40</sup> The deal was made and the letter delivered to Shaykh Zayd in Abu Dhabi. Later when Ḥusayn ibn Ṭalāl (grandson of ‘Abdullāh), a long-serving ruler of Jordan from 1951 until his death in 1999, asked for the letter to be returned to Jordan, Shaykh Zayd immediately complied with the request and handed the letter over to King Ḥusayn.<sup>41</sup> Presumably it remains in the possession of the ruling family in Jordan.

### The Prophet's (ﷺ) Letter to the Ruler of Damascus

The ancient city of Damascus has been the historic capital of the land called al-Shām. This comprised a much larger area than present-day Syria. Al-Shām historically included the whole of Palestine, Jordan, Lebanon, present-day Syria and all lands to the west linking up with the Byzantine Empire. The Ghassānīs, an Arabian tribe, settled in Damascus in the second century CE and gradually assumed power under the tutelage of the Romans. Al-Ḥārith ibn Abī Shimr al-Ghassānī was the ruler in Damascus during the advent of Islam. When the Prophet (ﷺ) sent letters to various kings and rulers, he sent Shujā' ibn Wahb (رضي الله عنه) to Ḥārith inviting him to Islam. When the Prophet's (ﷺ) emissary reached Damascus, al-Ḥārith was busy making preparations for Heraclius' journey from Ḥimṣ to Jerusalem. This was the time when Heraclius was fulfilling his vow to walk barefoot to Jerusalem to reinstall the cross in the Holy Sepulcher after retrieving it from the Persians. Shujā' waited at al-Ḥārith's door for three days before he was able to enter his court. As he waited outside the court, Shujā' struck up a friendship with a Byzantine guard named Murri who inquired about his mission. When told of the advent of the Prophet (ﷺ), Murri exclaimed that this was exactly what was told in their books. He immediately accepted Islam but requested Shujā' to keep it a secret lest al-Ḥārith cause him harm.

Ibn Sa'd says that when al-Ḥārith held court, he allowed entry to Shujā' who handed him the letter from the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ).<sup>42</sup> Al-Ḥārith called a translator to read the letter to him; the letter quoted by Ibn Kathīr from al-Wāqidī reads,

*Peace be upon him who follows the true path and makes a secure commitment to Him [Allah]. I invite you to commit to Allah alone — without associates — who will preserve your kingdom for you.*<sup>43</sup>

Obviously, it must have started with “In the name of Allah,” the invocation the Prophet (ﷺ) always used in his correspondence, as well as mentioning that it was from the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) and

addressed to a particular individual. This was the standard format of all letters sent by the Prophet (ﷺ). Since this letter, too, was sent out at the same time as a number of others, there is no reason to believe that his customary salutation and invocation were not there.

Upon hearing what the letter said, al-Ḥārith became angry and said, “Who is it that would take my kingdom away from me? I will go to him even if he is in Yemen and I will send people to present him before me.”<sup>44</sup> Al-Ḥārith then sent a letter to Heraclius seeking his permission to send an expeditionary force against the Prophet (ﷺ). The Byzantine emperor, however, advised him to come to Jerusalem and participate in the ceremonies of the cross. Shujā‘ stayed in Damascus all this while and finally decided to return to Madinah to report to the Prophet (ﷺ) about what had transpired. When he was leaving, Murri, the guard at al-Ḥārith’s court, asked him to convey his greetings to the Prophet (ﷺ) and also gave provisions for his return journey to Madinah.

When Shujā‘ returned to Madinah and narrated what he had encountered in Damascus, the Prophet (ﷺ) said that al-Ḥārith and his kingdom would soon perish. The Prophet (ﷺ), who was pleased to hear about Murri’s acceptance of Islam, prayed for him and acknowledged his greetings, saying that he had spoken the truth about the Bible and what it had recorded about the final messenger. In less than two years after he had rejected the Prophet’s (ﷺ) letter, al-Ḥārith died in 8AH — the same year the Muslims liberated Makkah. Haykal writes,

He [Heraclius] could not imagine that only a few years would pass before Jerusalem, as well as the whole of al-Shām would fall under Islamic dominion; that the Islamic capital would move to Damascus; that the struggle between the Islamic State and the Byzantine Empire would not subside until the Muslims had conquered Constantinople in 1453CE and converted its great church into a mosque in which the name of the Prophet (ﷺ) would be inscribed in honor...<sup>45</sup>



Jerusalem was liberated by the Muslims in 15AH (638CE) during the *khilāfah* of ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb (رضي الله عنه) and Constantinople was renamed Istanbul (from the word *Islam-bul*) by the Ottoman Turks and remains one of the most religiously pluralistic cities of the Muslim world — indeed the whole world — to this day.

### **The Prophet’s (ﷺ) Letter to Chosroe, King of Persia**

Muslim scholars narrate that the Prophet (ﷺ) sent ‘Abdullāh ibn Ḥudhayfaḥ al-Sahmī (رضي الله عنه) to Chosroe (Khusroe) with a letter inviting him to Islam.<sup>46</sup> Ibn Kathīr gives two different accounts of the event. In one he quotes al-Zuhri stating that the Prophet (ﷺ) sent Shujā‘ ibn Wahb (رضي الله عنه) to Chosroe,<sup>47</sup> while in the other he quotes Ibn Jarīr (referring to al-Ṭabarī), who indicates that ‘Abdullāh ibn Ḥudhayfaḥ al-Sahmī (رضي الله عنه) was the one dispatched.<sup>48</sup> There is clearly a contradiction in Ibn Kathīr’s narration; but all the other Muslim historians are unanimous that Shujā‘ ibn Wahb (رضي الله عنه) was sent to al-Ḥārith ibn Abī Shimr, the Ghassānī ruler of Damascus. The fact that all the emissaries were sent out at the same time precludes the possibility that Shujā‘ was sent to two different rulers. Even the reviewer of Ibn Kathīr’s translated works into English, Muneer Fareed, admits that Ibn Kathīr takes “liberty” not only with works on history but also with hadith material “...and the reader, particularly of the Arabic text, sometimes searches in vain for all but the gist of the traditions that he ascribes to, say the Ṣaḥīḥ of al-Bukhārī or that of Muslim.”<sup>49</sup> If he takes such liberties with hadith material, one must conclude that it would seriously undermine his narration of historical events where the same rigor applied to the compilation of the Hadith for sifting out the truth was lacking. The text of the letter sent to Chosroe is given in Exhibit 20.

Even before the full letter was read to him, Chosroe became furious at this “affront to his dignity” because he was not addressed before the name of the sender was mentioned. In his arrogance, he considered himself to be a god and demanded that he be respected accordingly. Also, he assumed that anyone who wrote to him must be his subject and should therefore address him

**Exhibit 20** – The Prophet’s (ﷺ) letter to Chosroe.

In the name of Allah, the Mercy-Giving, the Merciful.

From Muhammad, the Messenger of Allah, to Chosroe, the leader of Persia.

Peace be upon those who follow the true guidance, securely commit to Allah and His Messenger and bear witness that there is no deity/authority except Allah, who is unique and without partners, and that Muhammad is His servant and Messenger.

I call upon you with Allah’s invitation. I am Allah’s Messenger to all mankind, to warn all who live that the Word [of Allah] bears witness against those who reject Allah’s authority and command. If you accept Islam, you will be safe; if you refuse, then the sin of the *majūs* [a follower of what the Hellenistic world associated Zoroaster with] will be upon you.<sup>52</sup>



based on his self-proclaimed importance. In anger, he ripped up the letter, demanding to know who from among “his subjects” had the audacity to send such a letter to him. Since there were a number of rulers in the Arabian Peninsula that were under Chosroe’s imperial domain, he sent a message to one of them, Bādhān, the governor of Yemen, ordering him to send two brave warriors to the Ḥijāz to arrest and present this person before him. Meanwhile, ‘Abdullāh ibn Ḥudhayfaḥ al-Sahmī (رضي الله عنه) returned to Madinah and told the Prophet (ﷺ) what had transpired. Upon

hearing that Chosroe had torn up the letter, the Prophet (ﷺ) said, “May He [Allah] tear up his kingdom.”<sup>50</sup>

Chosroe’s Yemenī governor, Bādhān, sent two men — reported to be Kharkhsra and Qahramān — with orders to bring the Prophet (ﷺ) to Chosroe’s court. There is some disagreement among historians about the identity and number of persons Bādhān sent to Madinah.<sup>51</sup> Regardless of the exact identity of the persons, they delivered Bādhān’s message to the Prophet (ﷺ). When they appeared before the Prophet (ﷺ), they were overawed by his personality and the respect he commanded among his companions. Instead of “demanding” that he come with them as commanded by Chosroe, they requested the noble Messenger (ﷺ) to accompany them to Chosroe’s court. They said the emperor was very short-tempered and if offended, he would wreak terrible destruction upon Madinah and its people. They are also reported to have said to the Prophet (ﷺ) that if he came with them willingly, they would recommend to Chosroe to show leniency toward him. The Prophet (ﷺ) smiled at hearing this and told them to return the following day.

When the men returned as instructed, the Prophet (ﷺ) told them that Chosroe was dead and that his own son Shīrawayh had killed him the night before. Then he also told them to inform their master Bādhān, “My *dīn* and my power will attain that achieved by Chosroe and will ultimately encompass all creatures.”<sup>52</sup> The two men were surprised to hear about the death of Chosroe and appeared reluctant to believe it but nonetheless said they would report to their master in Yemen what they had just heard. When Bādhān learned about Chosroe’s death, he told his emissaries that this news would soon be verified; if true, it would confirm that Muhammad is indeed the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ). If Chosroe’s death was not confirmed, then they needed to reflect on this matter further.

Soon thereafter, Shīrawayh sent a letter to Bādhān confirming his killing of Chosroe and asked him to get a pledge of allegiance from the people of Yemen. He also instructed Bādhān not to confront the Prophet (ﷺ) as ordered by the now-dead Chosroe, but to await further instructions. Shīrawayh’s instructions not to confront the noble Messenger (ﷺ) were not based on his realization of the

truth; he was guided by the more mundane considerations of stabilizing the situation in his kingdom and consolidating his hold on power. Bādhān, however, needed no prodding on this score; he realized that the Prophet was indeed the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) and he together with the notables of Yemen embraced Islam.<sup>54</sup> After Bādhān accepted Islam, the noble Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) confirmed him in his position and instructed him to be just and fair when dealing with the people under his rule.

Imam al-Shāfi'ī states from Ibn 'Uyaynah through al-Zuhri, who traces it all the way back to Abū Hurayrah (رضي الله عنه), that the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said,

*When Chosroe perishes, there will be no Chosroe after him;  
and when Caesar perishes, there will be no Caesar after him.  
And I swear by Him who holds my soul in His hands, their  
treasures will be spent in the way of Allah.*<sup>55</sup>

This prediction of the noble Messenger (ﷺ) was soon confirmed. Their kingdoms soon perished when they were liberated by the advancing *mujāhids* of Islam.

The original letter sent to Chosroe exists in Lebanon, according to Dr. Ḥamīdullāh. It is in the possession of Henry Fir'awn, a Maronite Christian and a former foreign minister of Lebanon.<sup>56</sup> In November 1962, Henry Fir'awn handed the letter over to experts for examination and to decipher the contents because the words had dimmed over time and were not clearly legible. There is also a tear in the letter in the shape of an inverse L.<sup>57</sup> Dr. Ḥamīdullāh has discussed the contents and style of the letter in detail in his article, *A new discovery of an original letter of the Prophet (ﷺ) to Chosroe.*<sup>58</sup>

### **The Prophet's (ﷺ) Letter to Muqawqis, Ruler of Alexandria**

Egypt, at the crossroads of Africa and Europe, has historically enjoyed great importance. In the Qur'an, Prophet Mūsā's (عليه السلام) encounters with the Pharaoh have been narrated in many *sūrah's* (Ṭā. Hā., *al-Shu'arā'*, *al-Qaṣaṣ*, and others). At the advent of Islam,

Egypt, with its regional capital at Alexandria, was under the control of the Byzantine Empire. Muqawqis, a leading Coptic priest who was the Byzantine viceroy in Egypt, was among the rulers that received a letter from the Prophet (ﷺ) inviting him to Islam. The Prophet (ﷺ) was hopeful that as a person knowledgeable of biblical prophecies predicting the advent of the last prophet, Muqawqis would readily accept Islam. The text of the letter, delivered by Ḥaṭīb ibn Abī Balta‘aḥ (رضي الله عنه), is given in Exhibit 21 and an image of the actual letter is presented in Exhibit 21a.

After reading the letter, Muqawqis admitted that this was indeed the time for the advent of a new prophet but it was his understanding that this prophet would appear in al-Shām, that is, from amongst the Semitic Christians — an exclusivist orientation not unlike the Yahūd of Madinah who felt the last prophet should hail from the heredity of Banū Isrā’īl. He went on to narrate what his understanding from the Torah and the Bible was about the qualities of this prophet: that he would not take any *ṣadaqaḥ* but accept gifts, that the poor and destitute would follow him, and that between his shoulder blades, there would be the seal of prophethood — all characteristics of the noble Messenger of Allah (ﷺ).<sup>59</sup> After this, Muqawqis ordered the letter to be placed in a box made of ivory and then submitted it to the national treasury. In response to the Prophet’s (ﷺ) letter, Muqawqis sent an official correspondence indicating that he was not ready to accept Islam or Muhammad’s (ﷺ) prophethood (see Exhibit 22).

It would be immediately obvious that Muqawqis did not address the Prophet (ﷺ) as the *prophet* or *messenger*; instead he referred to him by his given name and as the son of ‘Abdullāh. This indicated his rejection of the message sent to him, akin to what Suhayl ibn ‘Amr had done when the Treaty of Ḥudaybiyah was being written down, objecting to the description of Muhammad as the Prophet of Allah (ﷺ). Suhayl was a *mushrik*; Muqawqis was a Christian priest, but nonetheless also a *mushrik* because he was not ready to subsume his worldly power into Allah’s (ﷻ) command and choice of Muhammad as the last and final Messenger (ﷺ). In an attempt to ingratiate himself to the emissary as well as the noble

**Exhibit 21** – The Prophet’s (ﷺ) letter to Muqawqis.

In the name of Allah, the Mercy-Giving, the Merciful.

From Muhammad, the Servant and Messenger of Allah, to Muqawqis, ruler of the Copts. Peace be upon him who follows the right path.

I invite you to Islam. If you accept it, you will have peace and will get a double reward from Allah (ﷻ). If you reject it then know that the sin of the Copts will also be upon you.

**“O followers of earlier revelation! Come unto that tenet which we and you hold in common: that we shall conform unto none but Allah, and that we shall not ascribe divinity to any beside Him, and that we shall not take human beings for our lords beside Allah.’ And if they turn away, then say, ‘Bear witness that it is we who have surrendered ourselves to Him’” [3:64].<sup>60</sup>**



Messenger of Allah (ﷺ), Muqawqis sent two free women and some other items as gifts.<sup>62</sup> Both of them — Māriyah and Sīrīn — embraced Islam on the way to Madinah through the influence, character, and knowledge of Ḥaṭīb ibn Abī Balta‘ah (رضي الله عنه). When Ḥaṭīb arrived in Madinah, he reported to the Prophet (ﷺ) what had happened in the court of Muqawqis. The noble Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said that the greed of this world, that is, the desire to cling to his temporary kingdom, had prevented Muqawqis from accepting Islam. Then the Prophet (ﷺ) married Māriyah while he gave Sīrīn

Exhibit 21a – The actual letter sent to Muqawqis.



Exhibit 22 – Muqawqis' response to the Prophet's (ﷺ) invitation.

To Muhammad, the son of 'Abdullāh, from Muqawqis.

I have read your letter and understood what you have mentioned and invited us to. I know that a prophet is yet to emerge but it was my understanding that he would appear in al-Shām.

I have treated your emissary with respect. I am sending two Coptic girls of great nobility to you as a gift together with gifts of clothes and a white mule, al-Duldul, for your [means of] transport. May peace be with you.<sup>61</sup>

in marriage to his scribe Ḥassān ibn Thābit (ؓ). Māriyah gave birth to the Prophet's (ؐ) son Ibrāhīm, who died in infancy.

### Discovery of the Letter to Muqawqis in Egypt

In 1854, the French orientalist Monsieur Reinaud published a letter in the French quarterly *Journal Asiatique* that he had received from a Monsieur Beilin. The letter was dated March 10, 1852 and sent from Cairo, Egypt. In it, Beilin had referred to a document discovered by Monsieur Etienne Bartholemy, a specialist in the Coptic language. The latter was doing research in Egypt on ancient manuscripts when he came upon this letter wrapped inside other documents in a Coptic monastery in Akhmīm, Egypt.<sup>63</sup> Monsieur Bartholemy sold this letter to Sultan 'Abd al-Ḥamīd of Turkey for £300 sterling. The Turkish sultan had it preserved in a gold box and placed it in the Topkapi Museum together with a number of other artifacts belonging to the Prophet (ؐ). In the museum, there are two boxes, one made of silver and the other of gold; on the silver box, there are displayed two swords belonging to the Prophet (ؐ) while inside the gold box are the Prophet's (ؐ) dress and his flag.<sup>64</sup> The 8th-century Hijrī Islamic scholar, Abū 'Abdullāh Muḥammad ibn 'Alī Aḥmad al-Muqaddasī says in his book, *Miṣbāḥ al-Muḍā*, that the letter to Muqawqis was written by Abū Bakr (ؓ).<sup>65</sup>

### Nature of the Prophetic *Da'wah*

At this juncture, two important points need to be made about how the Prophet (ؐ) presented Islam. Firstly, the Prophet (ؐ) sent out his emissaries to the various heads of state, kings, rulers, and potentates of his day directly after the Treaty of Ḥudaybiyah was concluded, that is, within a couple of months. After the treaty was signed, the Prophet (ؐ) was only on par — in so far as the geo-political and geo-strategic position was concerned — with the Quraysh of Makkah, meaning that his growing power only rivaled that of Quraysh in the peninsula, or so it seemed. At this point in time,



neither the Islamic State in Madinah, nor the Quraysh's preeminent position in the Peninsula could have been construed by any pundit or analyst as a major power in the world, certainly not potential challengers to Persia and Byzantium — especially the Makkans who up to now had handled themselves rather obsequiously with regard to the northern powers. In fact, what was happening in the “middle of the desert” was hardly noticed by the two superpowers of the era, who preferred to believe, because of commercial and trade considerations, that the areas on the peripheries of the Peninsula — Yemen, Bahrain, Egypt, Palestine, and al-Shām — were much more important to control and hold sway over. But nonetheless, despite his perceived junior standing on the geo-strategic chess board, the Prophet (ﷺ) sent his message-bearers to the most powerful people of his age.

Obviously, Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) did not regard himself to be one who is lacking in power. How could he? With Allah's (ﷻ) support, with the Qur'anic revelation causing seismic shifts in the restructuring of human behavior, and with the finest generation now coming into its own as the state instrument of the *da'wah*, how was it possible for the Islamic precedent, with Muhammad (ﷺ) as its antecedent, to be vanquished? What confidence! In spirit, the power of the Prophet (ﷺ) had already exceeded whatever level of temporal power the others in the world seemed to control, and after a few years, this would also become a physical and political fact of life. None of the other power centers and their rulers had a personal and social affiliation with their flock in the way the Prophet (ﷺ) did (in fact, the rulers of the day, not unsurprisingly different than now, were the most insecure people as they had to continually look over their shoulders to make sure the latent political intrigue in their courts would not overthrow them when the right opportunity presented itself). None of them ruled with principles of justice and equity so that the respect of the people could be channeled for instance into equilibrating economic and social disparities. And finally, none of them were receiving the *āyāt* of the Qur'an so that the new behaviors of the governors and the governed could be anchored into the institutional and social culture of new generations.

In the build-up to the Battle of al-Khandaq (also called the Battle of al-Aḥzāb), when the Muslims were digging the trench around Madinah, the Prophet (ﷺ) had wanted to give the Muslims around him a taste of this confidence. At the prospect of having to fight all of Arabia, the Muslims' self-assurance was at a low point, and so when they could not break a large boulder, they called the Prophet (ﷺ) over to help them out; and al-Barā' ibn 'Āzib (رضي الله عنه) gave the following account of what happened,

*...So the Messenger (ﷺ) came; he threw off his outer garment, took hold of the pickaxe, and then said, "In the name of Allah." He then struck the rock [with the pickaxe] and sheared off one-third of it; then he said, "Allah is the Greatest; I have been given the keys to al-Shām, and by Allah, I can most assuredly see its red castles from my place here [where he was standing]. Subsequently he struck [the rock] again while saying, "In the name of Allah," and sheared off another one-third; following that he said, "Allah is the Greatest; I have been given the keys to Persia, and by Allah, I can most assuredly see the White Palace of Madāyin. Then he struck the rock a third time, beginning again with, "In the name of Allah," and pulverized the last third; he then said, "Allah is the Greatest; I have been given the keys to Yemen, and by Allah, I can most assuredly see the Gate of Ṣan'ā'.<sup>66</sup>*

It could be said in a sense that Ḥudaybiyah was the first "international" treaty signed by the Prophet (ﷺ). This put him on the map as a bona fide world leader, and by the urgency with which he took immediate action, he was showing the Muslims that when you find yourself in a position of responsibility, exercising power over others, you have to act like you belong. What you do convinces people that you are who you say you are. Concluding the treaty transformed the local perception of the city-state of Madinah from a backwater hamlet of Makkah into a territorial power, much the same as all the other territorial powers in the area, albeit not as large. The Prophet (ﷺ) was functioning as a head of state ought to

function: leading his people into military engagements, enacting treaties with other power centers, being the final arbiter and judge of unresolved societal conflicts, and being the final executor of the law. As Allah's final Messenger (ﷺ), he was not in the business of waiting for others to do things; he was always proactive about his responsibilities as a leader, model, and example, regardless of what kind of power position he found himself in.

Like his behavior upon his arrival in Madinah, when he immediately set out to engage the neighboring tribes in pacts of non-aggression; and like his behavior at the end of the pre-Uḥud *shūrā*, when he immediately put on his battle gear; he, when he became a world leader at the Treaty of Ḥudaybiyah, expeditiously engaged the other world leaders, not only for the purpose of salvaging their souls, but also to put Madinah into the domain of their future geo-political considerations and to give them advanced warning of what is coming in a way that only another world leader, backed up by a military and state entity, can. Power accrues to those who establish a consistent pattern of action, not reaction. This is part of the reason why the petty dictatorships in the Muslim world today get tossed around like tennis balls between this power center and that; in reality, they have no power in the larger geo-strategic arena because the locus of the basis of their power resides not in their own capitals and universities, but in the ideological canon that is formulated in Washington, Tel Aviv, London, Paris, and the Vatican.

Acting in the way he did in his capacity as a world leader, the Prophet's (ﷺ) forward-thinking conduct had another salient impact on the maturing Muslim Ummah. Makkah was the immediate challenge to Allah's (ﷻ) authority and command, but it certainly was not the only such power center. It was a local representation of a larger global power culture that was at odds with Allah's (ﷻ) program of social justice and with the noble features of human nature, especially in so far as it was this human nature that was deputized to be Allah's (ﷻ) vicegerent on earth. However, Makkah was the key: liberating the first house built for conformity to Allah (ﷻ) would drive the liberation of the rest of humanity. But while the Prophet (ﷺ) was a resident of Makkah, before the Hijrah, he was not able to

deal with the Qurayshī aristocracy in the same way he ultimately dealt with them when he was the leader of Madinah, at the head of an organized military with all the societal support structures that go along with it. And this is a lesson the Islamic movement needs to learn today about the consolidation and use of power. Presenting ideological challenges is not enough; it is a beginning, not an end. An ideological exposition of truth and the ideas that accompany it is tepid at best, unless it is chaperoned by the threat of imminent jihad. The first battle to curtail the *kufṛ* and *shirk* emanating out of Makkah took place 15 years after a process of acculturation into the Islamic and Qur'anic program; had such a battle taken place 10 years earlier, it would have been summarily lost.

And similar was the case with the letters sent to the rulers of the day. The Prophet (ﷺ) and the Muslims, before Ḥudaybiyah and the liberation of Makkah, were in no position to deal militarily with the superpowers: the Prophet (ﷺ) was not yet recognized as a legitimate head of state and the Muslim forces were still going through phases where the failure of commitment in their ranks was diminishing the achievement of their objectives and where the indigenous elements of defective allegiance were still in the process of being weeded out. However, after reaching the level of competence that enabled them to subdue Makkah, the Muslims were now ready to take on those who challenged Allah's (ﷻ) authority in other parts of the world. And Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) wasted no time. By sending his emissaries, he immediately put the *ṭāghūtī* authorities in the world on notice: their generational program of oppression, degradation, humiliation, and corruption would no longer be tolerated, and Allah's final Messenger (ﷺ) was sent to ensure their compliance, either willingly or unwillingly. And he and those with him would not back out of, back away from, or back up from this responsibility.

As for the Muslims, the Prophet's (ﷺ) initiative prevented them from becoming complacent. Ḥudaybiyah and the liberation of Makkah were only a start. Those who would celebrate their laurels and relax after returning to Makkah, thinking they no longer had to strive for anything, were sadly mistaken. There was still oppression and corruption in other parts of the world, and the vic-

torious peninsular Muslims were now required to take what they had learned and export it to those who were still experiencing what the Muslims had liberated themselves from after 21 years of struggle. The Prophet (ﷺ) knew that the best chance the Muslims had to maintain the momentum he had taken the better part of two decades to build was to be close to Allah (ﷻ). And to be close to Him, they had to constantly rely on Him, and no other power figure or ideological source. The Prophet (ﷺ) had brought the Muslims through 10 years of near constant volatility in Madinah, but this was not unplanned, for he was well aware of the fact that reliance on Allah (ﷻ) is most sincere when you need Him most, when you are to a degree unsettled, when you are under some kind of unmanageable stress that will not go away. It is in these types of conditions when your connection with the *ghayb* is strong enough to make you as innovative and as creative as you can be. And in engaging with Allah (ﷻ) in this way, you can translate your commitment into pacesetting solutions on the ground. To maintain them in crisis mode with a perpetual sense of urgency was thus to keep them embedded in the most unpolluted environs with Allah (ﷻ) — to keep them “in the zone” so to speak; as Allah (ﷻ) says,

**[But] do you think that you could enter paradise without suffering like those [committed devotees] who passed on before you? Tribulation and suffering befell them, and so disturbed were they that the Apostle, and the committed disciples with him, would exclaim, “When will Allah’s support come?” Certainly, Allah’s support is [always] near! (2:214).**

Going further in this direction, the Prophet (ﷺ) is the one who taught us how to purify our ranks so that the results of our efforts are every bit as fruitful as they can be. With all the pain and hardship he endured, his sublime leadership model demonstrated that crises in which the worldly odds are against you, always separate out the *munāfiqs* (dual-loyalists), who will always be swimming around unnoticed in Muslim ranks, from those of secure commit-

ment. A crisis always forces those involved to take sides, and a *munāfiq* will always choose worldly advantage over extra-worldly principle. This is another fact of life, revealed from a power consideration of the *Sirah*, that the Islamic movement, as it inches ever closer to leadership on a regional and global scale, would be well advised to be cognizant of.

Because Muslims typically do not think about power and what leaders do with power, this second major point about the nature of the prophetic *da'wah* is almost completely outside the domain of what they feel should be appropriate to promote the Islamic program. In the current Muslim appraisal of the structure and content of *da'wah* activities — which is an amalgamation of a reflexive apologia for jihad and the subjugation of women on the one hand, and a servile counterfeit of Christian proselytization on the other — the approach of the Prophet (ﷺ) does not figure in at all, other than in the personal manners of the *dā'ī*.

In the primary instance, the unfortunate universal standard for *da'wah* is the model the Prophet (ﷺ) employed during his 13 years in Makkah, after which he only ended up with 73 followers. But this argument is not about numbers. The universal standard for *da'wah* ought to be the full spectrum of the Prophet's (ﷺ) engagement with Muslims and non-Muslims over his entire 23-year mission, not just the Makkan period. Staying with the Makkan period gives the Muslims an excuse to not have to do more. There needs to be a time limit on how long to employ the Makkan model of *da'wah*, after which the Muslims make a collective transition to the Madinan model. The Prophet (ﷺ) was constrained to use the Makkan model for 13 years because he could not earlier find the kind of facilitation he received in Madinah. The Muslims today, unlike the example of he who they claim to follow, have been stuck in the Makkan approach to *da'wah* for the past 300 years, and if it is left up to the remedial academic imperatives of Arabian *salafis* who choose to put all their energies into “debate” with non-Muslims in interfaith dialogues, who knows how long we will have to endure placing Islam as just another idea on the table with other man-made ideas.

It is patently false to suggest that those who accept Islam through the Makkan approach today represent quality — as they did at the Prophet's (ﷺ) time; and it is equally false to say that we have no other option today but to employ the Makkan model. The quality of those who accepted Islam in Makkah during Islam's first days was validated by what transpired in Madinah. With no Madinan period today, how are we to assess the quality of the people who are accepting Islam? There could be, and most likely are, a ton of *munāfiqs* floating in and out of Muslim populations and communities, and those who make decisions on behalf of the Muslims are no bit the wiser. We see these *munāfiqs* surface now and then when the domestic condition of Muslims, as in the United States and Western Europe these days, becomes overly constricted and routinely oppressive. The Madinan and the Makkan models are conjoined; employing one exclusively is counterproductive.

Next, and let us not apologize for this: the legal and the moral vehicle that carries the *da'wah* is jihad. Even though many Westernized Muslims will have a very hard time swallowing this statement, it goes to the very heart of the Prophet's (ﷺ) approach to *da'wah* in Madinah. *Da'wah* at its very core is related to making the recipients free to fulfill and be fulfilled by their relationship with Allah (ﷻ) before they get promoted to the next life. In practical terms, this means freedom of conscience, freedom of thought, and freedom of action, all within a just and moral framework, to do things in a better way. But there are those who thrive on a limitation of such freedoms, and they are not likely to give up their power position easily. Allah (ﷻ) makes it very clear to all who read His words and are committed to His Prophet (ﷺ),

**For, if Allah had not enabled people to defend themselves against one another, [all] monasteries and churches and synagogues and *masjids* — in [all of] which Allah's name is abundantly extolled — would surely have been destroyed [by now].**

**And Allah will most certainly support him who supports His cause, for, verily, Allah is Most Powerful,**

Almighty, [well aware of] those who, [even] if We entrench them on earth, remain observant of Us in their *ṣalāh* and in their distribution of wealth. They enforce the *ma'rūf* [the common good] and they stem the *munkar* [the common wrong], but with Allah rests the outcome of all events (22:40–41).

Throughout his tenure in Madinah, the Prophet (ﷺ) always presented Islam, whether it was related to his personal character or to matters of policy, as the head of state of Madinah. In general, when he took the initiative (obviously he would not refuse ordinary individuals when they came to him), he would address his counterparts who were the chief decision makers of their respective tribes, or later, the heads of state of the regional empires of the day. This approach has several advantages, but in order to appreciate them, we must understand what leaders do.

In the most general sense, leaders shape how their people respond to change. Leaders accomplish this by setting a directional course, by aligning their people to the new direction, and by holding them accountable for what they said they would do. Setting a directional course involves creating a sense of urgency, painting a vision of the future, coming up with a strategy to get there, and satisfying the legitimate needs of important constituencies by reflecting their hopes and aspirations in the vision. Alignment is concerned with acquainting very large groups of people, usually domestic and alien power centers, with the principles and objectives of the new direction. Alignment is a problem of effective communication to a target audience that can help the leader achieve the vision, as well as those who would place obstacles in the way of such achievement. One of the biggest challenges here is credibility: the leader's perceived integrity and trustworthiness, his track record, the content of his message, and the concordance between words and deeds. Only leaders can perform these tasks, spending the bulk of their time in alignment activities.

Obviously, there was nothing lacking in the Prophet's (ﷺ) character or in the message he was bearing, so much so that to



those leaders to whom the revelation was recited, they immediately knew it was the truth, and to those from Ahl al-Kitāb who were acquainted with the deportment and characteristics of the Prophet (ﷺ), they from their own knowledge of prophecy knew he was the expected final Prophet (ﷺ). Leaders have the most expansive view of the big picture, and whether they exercise power through the force of coercion or through the force of obligation, they have the greatest impact on the direction their societies are going to head in.

And so a big part of the prophetic *da'wah* was to introduce Islam, the Qur'an, and the *taqwā* of Allah (ﷻ) to these types who would potentially have the most far-reaching influence on the lives and decisions of their people. The Prophet (ﷺ) used this approach not only in Madinah where he presented the message to the chief decision makers of the surrounding tribes (in many such instances, when the most influential member of a tribe accepted Islam, then so did the rest of the tribe), but also throughout his stay in Makkah, and in al-Ṭā'if. In the first 13 years of his mission, the Prophet (ﷺ) communicated the new directional course to the Makkan society at large, and beyond through the travellers who would come there to perform 'Umrah and Hajj. When he arrived in Madinah, he immediately communicated a sense of urgency about an imminent attack from the Quraysh. He then used this to consolidate Madinah's power position in the peninsula by entering into pacts of non-aggression with the surrounding tribes, and by addressing the legitimate needs of the important power constituencies inside the city through the Covenant of Madinah. In the next seven years, he spent his time not only communicating the evolving directional course as it was being revealed and recorded in the Qur'an, but also in aligning a critical mass of Muslims, *al-ladhīna āmanū*, around a more just and equitable vision of the future. In the last three years, by sending out his emissaries and by dispatching the Muslim army to Mu'tah and Tabūk, he spent aligning those powers in the world who could potentially threaten the achievement of the Islamic vision to the new directional course, which was now being more capably carried by a disciplined Islamic society whose external responsibilities were represented by a principled Islamic military force.

All this he achieved not through the power of coercion, but by consolidating power through inspiration, motivation, compassion for those who were maturing by trial and error, and patience in the face of major setbacks — which is what effective leadership is supposed to do. In less than a hundred years of his passing on to heavenly company, the vast majority of civil societies in the world at that time either accepted Islam en masse or were very well acquainted with it. Did this happen because Muslims were busy organizing and participating in interfaith conferences? No, indeed. The greatest gift of the prophetic *da'wah* is that he created an institutional culture of leadership that produced a new generation of leaders in the mold of the Prophet (ﷺ) himself — leaders who concentrated on removing the traditional military obstacles that protected the interests of entrenched aristocracies so that entire peoples could lift themselves up to a higher (Islamic) plane of consciousness. This is why one out of every three people in the world today is Muslim.

How many of us today look at *da'wah* as a communication from a higher moral power position to a lower one? And how many of us are dedicated to moving *da'wah* activities into a domain where they have the maximum impact, in the mode of the Prophet (ﷺ)? How many of our so-called leaders have the capacity, the credibility, and the self-confidence when they engage non-Muslims to invite them to Islam as the foremost of their priorities, before they engage in any other business? In fact, today, our leaders are just the opposite: the last thing on earth they want to talk about is their “religion.” The vast majority of them do not live and make decisions according to its principles, and thus when they are questioned about terrorism, extremism, jihad, honor killings, and the like, they run and hide.

In closing out this section, all of us are familiar with the rapid expansion (and decline) of communism and capitalism in the past 100 years. Communism is basically dead, and capitalism is not far behind, especially with the precipitous fall of its most vocal advocate, the United States. Both economic philosophies are vacuous; to the majority of humanity, they brought nothing but misery, oppression of all kinds, institutionalizing a transfer of wealth from the poor to the

rich, and perpetual war. The penetration of both into all corners of the globe reflects an unraveling of the collective human moral and intellectual fabric. So how is it possible, despite their obvious drawbacks, for both economic philosophies to have taken over the earth? Did this happen because university professors were busy indoctrinating young students into the ideological positions of both economic paradigms? Of course not. If such an approach was even possible, it would have taken hundreds of years before a competent generation could have been sufficiently developed to take over.

The only way to explain the rapid expansion is power. Instruments of state (the military, the media, the politicians, the corporations, the think tanks, and the government) were carrying the ideological positions, associated policies, and administrative mechanisms into other countries. Were it not for the finances, the wherewithal, and the weapons of the American and Soviet empires, both capitalism and communism would have been still-born. Few people in positions of real power today object to American democracy and capitalism being presented to foreigners via F-16s and Abrams tanks. They still love democracy and free-market, *laissez-faire* “values.” So why do they have a problem when Islam is similarly presented to non-Muslims through certain instruments of the Islamic state, jihad being a key one? In point of fact, you would expect *kufir* and *shirk* to have a double face; the real question is why do the Muslims have a problem with it, especially when these same Muslims go through great pains to show that all Islamic instruments of persuasion are principled and just? Do we not affirm that the Prophet (ﷺ) used his position of power to advance Islam to those who were in a similar power position? Do we not affirm that the *khalifahs* who came after him did the same? Do we not say that there was no finer human being than the Prophet (ﷺ)? And do we not believe that the first generation of Muslims was the finest human generation that ever existed? And so why do we not go after consolidating and wielding power in the same way he did, and the way the first generation did? Power is an essential component of the *da'wah* — one that has been missing for far too long — and the example of the Prophet (ﷺ) confirms it.

### How Superpowers React to Issues of Truth and Justice

In reviewing the circumstances and the background in which the Prophet (ﷺ) sent letters to various rulers inviting them to Islam, it should be emphasized that the Byzantine and Persian empires were the superpowers of the time. They not only controlled vast territories but they also had great influence over others as a result of their military might. While they fought each other to extend their influence, the “third world” potentates of that day strived to maintain a compliant proxy relationship with the one or the other, clearly fearing major reprisals if they did not toe the line. The world today provides striking parallels with the political and military state of affairs that existed 1,400 years ago. Until the early 1990s, there were two superpowers in the world — the Soviet Union and the United States. They held the world at ransom, terrorizing much of its peoples by forcing them to choose between the “better” of two bad spheres of influence. They were engaged in a cold war pursuing MAD (Mutually Assured Destruction) policies that brought the world to the edge of a nuclear winter and sapped all of its resources for the service of perpetual war.

In the Arabian Peninsula of the Prophet’s (ﷺ) era, there was no organized central authority. As a tribal society, there was continual fighting between the tribes for basically petty reasons — devoid of any moral considerations or values. The stronger tribes oppressed and exploited the weaker ones. Since Makkah was totally barren, it was especially vulnerable because it was dependent for its survival on trade. It was, therefore, natural that the power contingent of Makkah, the Quraysh, would strive to be on good terms with the rulers of the two superpowers. The fact that many Makkans had personal relations with the Negus in Abyssinia also corroborates their craven tendency to cozy up to those who had more power than they did. This was the case prior to the advent of Islam.

Without the benefit of the fearless self-assurance that comes with assimilating into divine guidance, individuals as well as societies soon succumb to the corrosive influence of power and wealth. They become tools of oppression and tyranny rather than a means to help mankind achieve its potential of being Allah’s (ﷻ) trustee

on earth. The Persian emperors were Zoroastrians,<sup>67</sup> as were most of the people; there were others that were *mushriks*. While the Byzantines were nominally Christians, they were also divided into numerous sects as well as engrossed in the worldly pursuit of power and wealth, rather than in following the true teachings of Prophet Jesus (ﷺ). Rituals and superstitions had convulsed Byzantine society while the essence of the teachings of Prophet Jesus (ﷺ) had been abandoned. Even though he knew it was the truth when he was personally invited by the noble Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) through an official correspondence, the Byzantine emperor Heraclius rejected the message of Islam because he feared an overthrow by his intransigent, stiff-necked courtiers. Instead, he decided to cling to this world and reject the hereafter despite the fact that he knew this world is transitory and that he himself could see he would lose his kingdom shortly. At times, people who do not have any *taqwá* make the wrong choices even when they are aware they are making an error. The Bishop Saghatir, on the other hand, immediately recognized that the noble Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) was indeed the awaited prophet and had no hesitation in accepting his message even though he paid with his life. He preferred the life of true faith over a life of denial that would have resulted in severe punishment in the hereafter.<sup>68</sup>

The Persian emperor, on the other hand, was too consumed by his own self-importance and intoxicated by power to realize the purpose of the message contained in the letter sent by the noble Messenger (ﷺ). He did not even bother to hear it in full before ripping it up and going into a rage. This is what happens to people when they are consumed by worldly desires, especially power and wealth. But what was the end result of their arrogance? Both the Byzantine and Persian empires were liberated by the Muslims in a very short period after the noble Messenger (ﷺ) left this physical world. Within 15 years of the Prophet's (ﷺ) death, the Muslims had wrested away from Byzantine hegemony all of al-Shām, Egypt, and Palestine (including Jerusalem); and from Persian sway all of Iraq, Bahrain, and Persia, not to mention the outlying areas within the Arabian Peninsula.

Whereas the Prophet's (ﷺ) decision to send emissaries, to directly and personally invite the rulers at his time to Islam, reflected his universal mission, it also signified the fact that Islam is both for this world as well as for the hereafter. It should be clear that Islamic teachings are not meant merely for personal piety while criminals and mass murderers are given a free hand to control and exploit the world — as is happening in the world today. The resultant suffering, the scale of death and trauma wrought on innocents is unprecedented and clearly visible, all in the name of a demonic ideology of greed, consumerism, and protection of the rapacious and extravagant “American way of life.”

For Muslims, the Prophet's (ﷺ) Sunnah and *Sīrah* should mean more than the simple aspects of *wuḍū'*, *ṭahārah*, and *najāsah*, important as these may or may not be to man's social responsibilities. Nor should the *Sīrah* be reduced to sessions of ritualistic *dhikr* devoid of any attention to how conscientizing Allah (ﷻ) should reshape the social dynamic into conformity with principles of truth and justice. Some Muslims seclude themselves from the world and busy themselves with *dhikr* claiming to be following the Sunnah of the noble Messenger of Allah (ﷺ). Did he abandon the world to concentrate only on ritual prayers? Did he confine himself in al-Masjid al-Nabawī or Masjid al-Ḥarām for days or weeks, as many Muslims do today in a show of piety? True, the blessed Messenger (ﷺ) spent long hours standing in nightly *ṣalāh* but he was also intimately involved in the daily affairs of the world, setting down a vision for how man's public mind ought to respond to prevalent modes of abasement and subjugation. He participated in jihad and *qitāl*; he led Muslim armies in battle and he sent emissaries to kings inviting them to Islam. When the Muslims begin to understand the totality of his Sunnah and *Sīrah*, only then will they be able to transform themselves individually as well as collectively to become the **“...best Ummah raised from among mankind” (3:110)**. The Prophet (ﷺ) did not invite the rulers of the two superpowers because he coveted their kingdoms or wealth; his purpose was to **“...bring them out of darkness into light” (65:11)**, as commanded by Allah (ﷻ). When they refused, they sealed their own fate, much as the

rulers of the Arabian countries today (Ben Ali of Tunisia, Mubarak of Egypt, Qaddafi of Libya, Saleh of Yemen, and the Khalifah family of Bahrain) are doing in their arrogant and often brutal response to civil protests pushing for more responsible representation.

But the Muslims of today must also understand that when the principled Muslim soldiers of the Prophet's (ﷺ) day fought against *mushrik* adversaries, they did so with courage and conviction, motivated not by a desire to inflict maximum suffering or to plunder wealth but to subdue the divisive instincts of the rulers, the scorched-earth conduct of their armies, and the torturous propensities of their security apparatuses. Compare this with today's power culture. Its first and foremost purpose is to inflict the utmost suffering on innocent people, guided as they are by an ideology of terror (the very first use of atomic energy was not to bring electricity to the desert but to develop a super weapon that would kill the largest number of non-combatants so as to terrorize the enemy into surrendering immediately). They have nothing to offer others in terms of values or ideas and so they have to use force where logic and rationale were not able to do the convincing. Mass murder does not qualify as valued policy. While such policies result in immense suffering they also breed resentment and lead to the emergence of groups that would resist such policies, often with little diminution in the reactive level of savagery.

The Prophet's (ﷺ) purpose was to liberate the hearts of men and women. In following his Sunnah, when Muslims entered a land they established peace and justice, not tyranny and oppression. This naturally attracted the ordinary people, who were enduring lives of quiet desperation, to Islam; the Muslims did not have to force them to convert, contrary to the false and erroneous assertions of the orientalisks. This explains why those who converted to Islam out of a strong internal conviction did not abandon it despite undergoing great hardship.

With the demise of the Soviet Union and the collapse of communism, the US found itself in a position where it could be checked by no other world power. And thus presenting itself as the world's first global "superpower," it has turned out to be even nasti-

er than its marxist rival, leaving immense death and destruction in the wake of its occupations, especially in the Muslim world. But America's free ride as a "superpower" has come to an end within a decade at the hands of struggling Muslims, especially in Iraq and Afghanistan, but the price exacted from these victim societies — in human life and property devastation — has been exceptionally high. Weakened by its own internal toxicity, American muscle is beginning to atrophy, giving other centers of power the opportunity to challenge its hegemony. Regrettably for the short term, these powers are not Islamic in their orientation even though America's decline, as that of the Soviet Union before it, has come about at the hands of Muslim strugglers. However, as the age of greed comes to its inevitable end burying its communist and capitalist advocates, more and more Muslims are once again reasserting the power of Islam by turning to the perfect and unpolluted message in the Qur'an as exemplified by the Sunnah and Sirah of the noble Messenger of Allah (ﷺ).

The Prophet's (ﷺ) Sunnah and Sirah should instill confidence in today's committed Muslims and lead them to assume their natural role in the world: as leaders of mankind **"...inviting others to what is good and wholesome and prohibiting that which is evil, wicked, and contrary to the natural order of humanity"** (3:102).

## Notes and References

- 1 Abū Ja'far ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh al-Umam wa-al-Mulūk* (popularly known as *Tareekh-e Tabari*), Volumes 1 & 2 (Urdu). (Karachi, Pakistan: Nafees Academy, 1987), p. 345;

Abū 'Abdullāh Muḥammad ibn Sa'd, *Kitāb al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā*, Volumes 1 & 2, 6th edition (Urdu). (Karachi, Pakistan: Nafees Academy, 1987), p. 29.

- 2 Cited in the 6th volume of the 10-volume work of Italian historian Leone Caetani, *Annali del l'Islam*, and then requested by,

Dr. Muḥammad Ḥamīdullāh, *Rasool-e Akram ki Siyasi Zindagi* (Urdu). (Karachi, Pakistan: Darul Asha'at, 2003), p. 177.



- 3 Ibid., pp. 178–79.
- 4 Torhan Can, *Topkapı Palace*. (Istanbul, Turkey: Orient Ltd Co., undated).
- 5 Martin Lings, *Muhammad (ﷺ): His Life Based on the Earliest Sources*. (Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia: Islamic Book Trust, 1983), p. 291.
- 6 Cited by Egyptian scholar Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd al-Bāqī al-Zarqānī in his book, *Sharḥ al-Mawāhib al-Laduniyah* (Volume 2, pp. 336–37), an explanation of al-Qaṣṭalānī’s original work, and quoted by,  
  
‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Suhaylī, *Rawḍ al-Anf, Volume 4 (Urdu)*. (Lahore, Pakistan: Ziaul Qur’an Publications, 2005), p. 168;  
  
Shibli Naumani, *Seeratun Nabi, Volume 1 (Urdu)*. (Lahore, Pakistan: Nashiran-e Qur’an Limited, undated), pp. 525–26.
- 7 Yūsuf (12:1–111), Sulaymān (27:28–44), and Mūsá (20:42–48 and several other āyāt) were three of these prophets (ﷺ).
- 8 Abū al-A‘lā Mawḍūdī, *Tafheem ul-Qur’an, Volume 3*. (Lahore, Pakistan: Maktaba-e Ta’meer-e Insaniyyat, 1974), pp. 724–31;  
  
Ḥamīdullāh, *Rasool-e Akram ki Siyasi Zindagi*, p.175;  
  
Professor Ḥamīdullāh refers to Theodor Noeldeke in the Encyclopedia Britannica, where several of his essays first appeared.<sup>a</sup> Noeldeke’s (also spelled Noldeke) article on the Qur’an, with some others, was republished in a volume called *Oriental Sketches*. The articles dealing with Persia were republished in a German volume, *Aufsätze zur persischen Geschichte* (Leipzig, 1887).
- a Hugh Chisholm (editor), *Encyclopedia Britannica, 11th edition*. (London, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1911).
- 9 Dr. Muḥammad Ḥamīdullāh, *Ahd-e Nabawi ki Maidan-e Jang (Urdu)*. (Rawalpindi, Pakistan: Ilmi Markaz, 1998), pp. 91–97.
- 10 Ibn Sa’d, *Kitāb al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā, Volume 2*, p. 29.
- 11 Al-Ṭabarī, *Tareekh-e Tabari, Volumes 1 & 2*, p. 345.
- 12 Bahrain, in the past, was not the island-state it is today; during the Prophet’s (ﷺ) time, the eastern part of the Arabian Peninsula including al-Aḥṣā’ and Oman, was called Bahrain.

- 13 Dr. Nisar Ahmed, *Naqoosh Rasool Number 5 (Urdu)*. (Lahore, Pakistan: Idara-e Farooqh-e Urdu, 1985), pp. 234–35.
- 14 Dr. Muḥammad Ḥamīdullāh, *Le Prophete de l'Islam (Payghambar-e Islam: Urdu translation from French)*. (Multan, Pakistan: Beacon House, 2005), p. 309.
- 15 Cited by Muḥammad ibn Sayyid al-Nās al-Shāfi'ī in his work *'Uyūn al-Athar fī Funūn al-Maghāzī wa-al-Shamā'il wa-al-Siyar* (Volume 2, p. 264), and then requoted by,  
  
Muhammad Yusuf Farooqui, *Naqoosh Rasool Number 7 (Urdu)*. (Lahore, Pakistan: Idara-e Farooqh-e Urdu, 1984), p. 605.
- 16 Cited by 'Alī ibn Burhān al-Dīn al-Ḥalabī in his book, *al-Sirāḥ al-Ḥalabīyah*, (Volume 3, p. 293), and then requoted by,  
  
Farooqui, *Naqoosh Rasool Number 7*, p. 605.  
  
Dr. Muḥammad Ḥamīdullāh, *Al-Wathā'iq al-Siyāsīyah fī al-'Ahd al-Nabawī wa-al-Khilāfah al-Rāshidah*, 7th edition. (Beirut, Lebanon: Dār an-Nafā'is, 2001), pp. 104–05.  
  
Ḥamīdullāh, *Le Prophete de l'Islam*, p. 311.
- 17 Ibn Sa'd, *Kitāb al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā*, Volume 2, p. 30.
- 18 Al-Ṭabarī, *Tareekh-e Tabari*, Volumes 1 & 2, p. 353.
- 19 Ibid., pp. 353–54.
- 20 Ibn Sa'd, *Kitāb al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā*, Volume 2, p. 30.
- 21 Abū Ja'far ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Tārikh al-Umam wa-al-Mulūk*, Volume 3. (Cairo, Egypt: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ālamīyah, 1960), p. 89;  
  
also cited by 'Alī ibn Burhān al-Dīn al-Ḥalabī in his book, *al-Sirāḥ al-Ḥalabīyah*, (Volume 3, p. 344), and then requoted by,
- 22 Ḥamīdullāh, *Rasool-e Akram ki Siyasi Zindagi*, p. 132.
- 23 Ibid., p. 133.

- 24 Dr. Ḥamīdullāh has quoted this letter from al-Bayhaqī who in turn took it from Ibn Ishāq. The former states that he also found this letter in Ibn Kathīr's *al-Bidāyah wa-al-Nihāyah*; quoted in

Ḥamīdullāh, *Rasool-e Akram ki Siyasi Zindagi*, p. 133.

- 25 Ibn Sa'd, *Kitāb al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā*, Volume 2, p. 30.

Buṣrā is near the Syrian border and is not the city of the same name in Iraq, al-Baṣrah.

- 26 Ḥamīdullāh, *Rasool-e Akram ki Siyasi Zindagi*, p. 176 (originally recorded in Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, Book 1, Chapter 6; and Book 56, chapter 102).

- 27 Ibn Sa'd, *Kitāb al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā*, Volume 2, p. 30.

- 28 Al-Ṭabarī, *Tareekh-e Tabari*, Volumes 1 & 2, pp. 346–51.

- 29 Abū al-Fidā' 'Imād al-Dīn Ismā'il ibn 'Umar ibn Kathīr (Trevor Le Gassick, translator), *Al-Siraḥ al-Nabawīyah*, Volume 3. (Reading, United Kingdom: Garnet Publishing, 2002), pp. 354–63.

- 30 Ibid., p. 357.

- 31 Ibid.

- 32 Ibid., p. 359.

- 33 Al-Ṭabarī, *Tareekh-e Tabari*, Volumes 1 & 2, p. 349.

- 34 Ibn Kathīr, *Al-Siraḥ al-Nabawīyah*, Volume 3, p. 360.

- 35 Ibid., p. 362.

- 36 Ibid.;

Al-Ṭabarī, *Tareekh-e Tabari*, Volumes 1 & 2, p. 350.

- 37 At that time, Syria comprised Palestine, Jordan, Ḥimṣ, and Damascus while all lands to the west that were part of the Byzantine empire were called al-Shām; this geographical description of regions is given in,

Al-Ṭabarī, *Tareekh-e Tabari*, Volumes 1 & 2, p. 351; and

Ibn Kathīr, *Al-Sirāḥ al-Nabawīyah*, Volume 3, p. 362.

38 Al-Ṭabarī, *Tareekh-e Tabari*, Volumes 1 & 2, p. 350.

39 Syed Mahboob Rizvi, *Maktoobaat-e Nabawi*, 2nd Edition. (Lahore, Pakistan: Idara-i Islamiyyat, 1975), p. 111 (he cites Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad al-Qaṣṭalānī in his book, *Sharḥ al-Bukhārī*, Volume 1, p. 67).

40 Ibid.

41 Dr. Muḥammad Ḥamīdullāh, *Al-Wathā'iq al-Siyāsīyah fī al-'Ahd al-Nabawī wa-al-Khilāfah al-Rāshidah*, 7th edition. (Beirut, Lebanon: Dār an-Nafā'is, 2001). p. 11.

42 Ibn Sa'd, *Kitāb al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā*, Volume 2, pp. 32–33.

43 Ibn Kathīr, *Al-Sirāḥ al-Nabawīyah*, Volume 3, p. 364.

44 Ibn Sa'd, *Kitāb al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā*, Volume 2, p. 33.

45 Muḥammad Ḥusayn Haykal (Dr. Ismā'il Rājī al-Fārūqī, translator), *The Life of Muhammad* (ﷺ). (Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia: Islamic Book Trust, 1993), p. 375.

46 Al-Ṭabarī, *Tareekh-e Tabari*, Volumes 1 & 2, p. 354;

Ibn Sa'd, *Kitāb al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā*, Volume 2, p. 31.

47 Ibn Kathīr, *Al-Sirāḥ al-Nabawīyah*, Volume 3, p. 364.

48 Ibid., p. 365;

Al-Ṭabarī, *Tareekh-e Tabari*, Volumes 1 & 2, p. 352–53 (he quotes Ibn Ḥamīd who related it to him from Salamaḥ through Ibn Ishāq, who got it from Yazīd ibn Abī Ḥabīb).

49 Ibn Kathīr, *Al-Sirāḥ al-Nabawīyah*, Volume 3, p. xviii (Muneer Fareed wrote the introduction to this volume and was also the reviewer for volumes 2–4).

50 Ibn Sa'd, *Kitāb al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā*, Volume 2, p. 31;

Ibn Kathīr, *Al-Sirāḥ al-Nabawīyah*, Volume 3, p. 365;

Al-Ṭabarī, *Tareekh-e Tabari*, Volumes 1 & 2, p. 355.

- 51 Ibn Kathīr, *Al-Siraḥ al-Nabawīyah*, Volume 3, p. 365 (he narrates that the two were accompanied by Bābawayh as well, to report on news about the Prophet (ﷺ)). He also says that Qahramān was a “scribe adept in Persian writing”).

Al-Ṭabarī, *Tareekh-e Tabari*, Volumes 1 & 2, p. 355 (he says Bābawayh was the scribe who accompanied Qahramān to Madinah).

Ibn Sa’d, *Kitāb al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā*, Volume 2, p. 31 (he mentions that Qahramān was accompanied by another person but does not give his name).

- 52 Al-Ṭabarī, *Tareekh-e Tabari*, Volumes 1 & 2, p. 354;

Ibn Sa’d, *Kitāb al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā*, Volume 2, p. 31;

Ibn Kathīr, *Al-Siraḥ al-Nabawīyah*, Volume 3, p. 365.

- 53 Al-Ṭabarī, *Tareekh-e Tabari*, Volumes 1 & 2, p. 356;

Ibn Sa’d, *Kitāb al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā*, Volume 2, p. 31;

Ibn Kathīr, *Al-Siraḥ al-Nabawīyah*, Volume 3, p. 366.

- 54 Al-Ṭabarī, *Tareekh-e Tabari*, Volumes 1 & 2, p. 356;

Ibn Sa’d, *Kitāb al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā*, Volume 2, p. 31;

Ibn Kathīr, *Al-Siraḥ al-Nabawīyah*, Volume 3, p. 366.

- 55 Ibid., p. 368.

- 56 Ḥamīdullāh, *Rasool-e Akram ki Siyasi Zindagi*, p. 233.

At the end of the First World War, Henry’s father had purchased it for 150 *dinārs* in Damascus. Perhaps the senior Fir’awn was unaware of how important a document he had acquired, burying it in the family archives. On May 22, 1963 the Beirut daily *Al-Hayat* published an article by Dr. Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Munajjid together with a photocopy of the letter, and the world witnessed for the first time the contents of the letter sent by the Prophet (ﷺ) to Chosroe, the king of Persia. Some two weeks earlier, there had been reports in other newspapers that an original letter of the Prophet (ﷺ) had been discovered.

57 Ibid., p. 234.

The letter was written on a leather membrane that was quite soft and had turned dark brown in color. It was pasted on a green cloth whose color had also faded. It measured 28 cm in length and 21.5 cm in width but was not uniform, the top being wider than the bottom. The letter comprised 15 lines altogether followed by a seal at the bottom that had all but disappeared except for the Arabic letter *rā'*, which according to Dr. Ḥamidullāh is probably from the word *rasūl* in Arabic. Upon closer examination, the author says he was able to read the words *rasūl* and *Allah*.

58 Ibid., pp. 233–38.

The article begins with the following note, “Since the publication of the third edition of this book [*Rasool-e Akram ki Siyasi Zindagi (Urdu)*], the most important development about the study of the Sirah is the discovery of the Prophet’s (ﷺ) letter to the Iranian emperor. In order to highlight these developments, the inclusion of a new chapter in the book appears appropriate.”

59 Rizvi, *Maktoobaat-e Nabawi*, 2nd Edition, p. 139.

60 Ḥamidullāh, *Al-Wathā'iq al-Siyāsiyah*, 7th edition, pp. 135–37 (he gives references to a number of historical works by al-Qazwīnī, al-Maqrizī, al-Suyūṭī, al-Bayhaqī, al-Qalshqandī, al-Ḥalabī, and others).

61 Ibid., p. 136;

Rizvi, *Maktoobaat-e Nabawi*, 2nd Edition, p. 139–40.

62 **jāriyah** – in Arabic, the root word *jarā* refers to running or flowing water, and thus in the context of a woman, the word *jāriyah* refers to a free (young) woman who is not connected to a family unit (as a wife or daughter), but is too advanced in years to be declared an orphan; in other words, it could be said that this is an *orphan* woman of marriageable age. The word is often deviously translated by highly agendized orientalist — who, choosing to refer to the pre-Islamic usage of the word, want to drive forth an anti-Islamic program by demeaning the character of the Prophet (ﷺ) — as *concubine* or *slave-girl*, referring in particular to Māriyah, the Coptic woman who married the Prophet (ﷺ) after she accepted Islam. The Prophet (ﷺ) never kept any slaves, nor encouraged his companions to do so.

63 Ḥamidullāh, *Rasool-e Akram ki Siyasi Zindagi*, pp. 155–62 (he also discusses the objections of orientalist relating to the authenticity of the letter as well

as those of the Egyptian writer Jurjī Zaydān, which were published in the Cairo monthly *al-Hilāl* in October, November, and December, 1904);

Ḥamīdullāh, *Al-Wathā'iq al-Siyāsiyah*, 7th edition, pp. 135–37 (here, he refers to *Journal Asiatique*, Number 5, Volume 4, 1854, pp. 482–98, where the letter is discussed in detail).

- 64 Ḥamīdullāh, *Rasool-e Akram ki Siyasi Zindagi*, p. 159;

A color photograph of the Prophet's (ﷺ) swords is shown in the reference below and is also available on the internet when an image search on the same is performed,

Ḥamīdullāh, *Ahd-e Nabawi ki Maidan-e Jang*, pp. 78–79.

- 65 Rizvi, *Maktoobaat-e Nabawi*, 2nd Edition, p. 141.

- 66 Narrated by al-Barā' ibn 'Āzib and recorded by 'Abd al-Ḥaq al-Ishbīlī.

- 67 **Zoroastrianism** – a religion founded before the 6th century BCE in Persia by the “Prophet” Zarathustra (often referred to by his Hellenized name, Zoroaster). It is said that Zarathustra only spoke of God, whom he referred to as Ahura Mazda, as the one and only supreme, divine deity and authority. Ahura Mazda is supposed to be the one uncreated Creator to whom all conformity is to be directed. His creation is the essence of truth, balance, and orderliness, while evil is described as just the opposite, and something chaotic that cannot be a by-product of Ahura Mazda's creation. Evil tries to destroy His creation, and all goodness on man's part — his thoughts, deeds, and plans — is related to taking an active role in resisting such destruction, falsehood, and chaos. Because man is required to take be an active participant in the conflict between good and evil, Zoroastrianism rejects all kind of asceticism.

In the religion, water and fire are considered to be agents of ritual purity and life-sustaining elements; thus most of the Zoroastrian liturgical rites involve some use of water and fire. Fire is considered to be the medium through which spiritual insight and wisdom is acquired and water is considered to be the source of that insight.

The majority of the original revelation communicated to Zarathustra, known as the Avesta, has been lost, with only a few ceremonial observances and rituals surviving. Before the Persian peoples accepted Islam en masse, Zoroastrianism was considered to be one of the world's largest religions. The majority of the world's Zoroastrians today, numbering around 100,000 according to some census figures, live in India's Gujarat area. The larger of the two Indian Zoroastrian communities are called Parsis, who apparently are

the descendants of Persian Zoroastrian migrants to India in the 10th century CE. One famous Parsi, who became a Ja'fari Shī'i at an early point in his life, was Muḥammad 'Alī Jinnāḥ, the founder of Pakistan.

68 Al-Ṭabarī, *Tareekh-e Tabari*, Volumes 1 & 2, p. 350.



## THE PROPHET'S (ﷺ) ḤAJJAH AL-WADĀ‘ AND FAREWELL KHUṬBAH AT ‘ARAFĀT

The Prophet (ﷺ) performed Hajj exactly four years after the Treaty of Ḥudaybiyah was signed in Dhū al-Ḥijjah, 6AH. That treaty came about when the noble Messenger (ﷺ), accompanied by 1,400 companions, was prevented by the *mushriks* of Makkah from performing the ‘Umrah. The treaty stipulated that he and his companions must return to Madinah without performing the ‘Umrah and come back the following year. As part of the deal, the Makkans would leave the city for three days to preclude the possibility of any clash with the Muslims. The noble Messenger (ﷺ) and his companions performed the ‘Umrah in the following year without any incident.

The six-year time period prior to the Treaty of Ḥudaybiyah was marked by numerous intense activities. These included promulgating the Covenant of Madinah as a governing document to rule the newly established city-state in Madinah, signing a number of treaties with various tribes outside Madinah as well as participating in numerous battles, the most famous of which were the Battles of Badr (Ramaḍān, 2AH), Uḥud (Shawwāl, 3AH) and al-Aḥzāb (Shawwāl, 5AH). There were also a number of other expeditions in between. The four-year period after Ḥudaybiyah was no less eventful.

Let us list some of the major events that occurred after the Treaty of Ḥudaybiyah,

1. Dispatch of emissaries to kings and rulers inviting them to Islam;
2. March on the Yahūdī stronghold of Khaybar and its liberation in al-Muḥarram, 7AH;
3. Return to Madinah of his companions, who had earlier migrated to Abyssinia including his cousin Ja'far ibn Abī Ṭālib (ﷺ), al-Muḥarram, 7AH;
4. Performance of 'Umrah al-Qaḍā', Dhū al-Qa'dah, 7AH;
5. Battle of Mu'tah, Jumādā al-Ūlā, 8AH;
6. Liberation of Makkah, Ramaḍān, 8AH;
7. Battle of Ḥunayn, Shawwāl, 8AH;
8. 'Umrah al-Ji'rānah, Dhū al-Qa'dah, 8AH;
9. Tabūk Expedition, Rajab, 9AH;
10. Revelation of *āyāt* relating to complete dissociation from the *mushriks* (first part of *Sūrah al-Tawbah*), Dhū al-Qa'dah, 9AH;
11. Delegations of Arabian tribes to Madinah to give *bay'ah* to the Prophet (ﷺ), 9AH;
12. Performance of Hajj and delivering the historic *khuṭbah* at 'Arafāt, Dhū al-Ḥijjah, 10AH.

As discussed in Chapter 6, within two years of signing the Treaty of Ḥudaybiyah, Banū Bakr, a clan of the Kinānah tribe that was allied to the Quraysh, violated their treaty obligations by attacking Banū Ka'b, a clan of the Muslim ally Banū Khuzā'ah, killing one of them. Compounding the crime, they killed a member of the Banū Ka'b clan within the boundaries of the Ḥaram, considered a major sin even by the *mushriks* of Makkah. The murder was perpetrated with the support of men of the Quraysh who took part in the attack under the cover of darkness. This clear breach of the treaty obliged the Muslims to aid their allies from Banū Khuzā'ah, resulting in the march on Makkah and its liberation in Ramaḍān, 8AH. This then led to the Battle of Ḥunayn and the defeat of the Hawāzin although Banū Thaqīf sought refuge in al-Ṭā'if and were spared.

The Prophet (ﷺ) performed Hajj in the 10th year of the Hijrah following several other events that had profound implications for consolidation of Muslim power not only in Madinah but the whole of the Arabian Peninsula. One was the expedition to Tabūk in 9AH undertaken against the 100,000-strong Byzantine (Roman) army in Rajab, 9AH. The Tabūk expedition was organized to reverse the setback the Muslims had suffered in the Battle of Mu'tah when 3,000 Muslims confronted a 30,000-strong Byzantine army on the Syrian border. Despite such heavy odds, the Muslims commanded by Zayd ibn Ḥarithah, who used to be the Prophet's (ﷺ) *mawlā*,<sup>1</sup> put up a good fight, suffering only 12 casualties. Three leading figures — Zayd ibn Ḥarithah, Ja'far ibn Abī Ṭālib, the Prophet's (ﷺ) cousin, and 'Abdullāh ibn Rawāḥah (رضي الله عنه) — were all martyred. They had been tasked by the noble Messenger (ﷺ) to take charge one after the other if the primary commander was martyred. After all three gave their lives for Allah (ﷻ), confirming their total commitment to the orders of the noble Messenger (ﷺ), Khālīd ibn al-Walīd (رضي الله عنه) took command and managed an orderly retreat saving the Muslim army from total defeat.

To pursue the military justice that remained unaccomplished at Mu'tah, the noble Messenger (ﷺ) made a public declaration to march on Tabūk to confront the Byzantine army amassed at the Syrian border. This was the first time the noble Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) declared his war intentions publicly. Madinah and its surroundings were afflicted by drought and to make matters worse, the weather was uncharacteristically hot. When the announcement to mobilize the Muslims to go on the expedition was made, the *munāfiqs* and those weak of *īmān* immediately made excuses to stay behind. They feared the Muslims would face a certain defeat at the hands of such a large army, which had nearly defeated them a year earlier. The *munāfiqs* made such excuses as saying their fruits were ripe and would surely be destroyed if not picked immediately. Given the drought, they did not wish to suffer further losses by being away from Madinah. While the Prophet (ﷺ) was glad to be rid of the *munāfiqs*, a 30,000-strong Muslim army — the largest ever assembled in the lifetime of the Prophet (ﷺ) — was nonetheless mobilized.

The Muslims, led by the noble Messenger (ﷺ), marched to Tabūk but when the Byzantines heard about the Muslim army, they decided to withdraw rather than engage them in battle. The Byzantine emperor, Heraclius, having returned from Jerusalem and now in Ḥimṣ, already had a dream that the “king of the circumcised” would bring divine justice to his kingdom. He had wanted to accept the message of Islam when he received the letter from the noble Messenger (ﷺ) inviting him to Islam but feared antagonizing his priests and therefore losing their support. Instead of making provisions for the *ākhirah*, he decided to cling to his earthly kingdom. This was now in danger of being lost and in a few years after the Prophet’s (ﷺ) departure from this earthly abode, the Muslims would liberate not only Syria but also Palestine, including Jerusalem and Asia Minor, from the Byzantines.

The Byzantines’ retreat in the face of Muslim advances enhanced Muslim prestige and honor, already high following the liberation of Makkah from the clutches of the Quraysh in Ramaḍān, 8AH. It was in these circumstances that tribes from all over Arabia realized the established power of Islam and sent delegations to give *bay’ah* (pledge of allegiance) to the noble Messenger (ﷺ) in Madinah. It was also during this time (Dhū al-Qa’dah, 9AH) that the first 18 *āyāt* of *Sūrah al-Tawbah*, declaring total dissociation from the *mushriks* and their banishment from Makkah, were revealed. The Ka’bah had already been cleansed of all idols the previous year when Makkah was liberated. Thus when the Holy Sanctuary was finally on track to resume its original mission as the capital of Islamic universalism and the asylum of mercy for all the distressed and disadvantaged of the world — a mission that was inaugurated millenia earlier by Ibrāhīm (عليه السلام) — the time was ripe for the noble Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) to perform Hajj.

Muslims would do well to remember that the noble Messenger (ﷺ) performed Hajj only once in his entire blessed life. Muslims of means in the Peninsula and abroad, who have made a habit of performing Hajj multiple times, sort of as a holiday or vacation to make a public show of their piety, seem to forget the other aspects of the Prophet’s (ﷺ) Sunnah and *Sirah*. Far be it for

such Muslims to struggle in the way of Allah (ﷻ) or to give up their extravagant lifestyle. *Taqwá* is not achieved by merely performing rituals; true *taqwá* comes by making a firm commitment to Allah (ﷻ) and giving freely in His way (2:177).

In the tenth year of the Hijrah, when the noble Messenger (ﷺ) announced his intention to perform Hajj, tens of thousands of people poured in from all over Arabia to join him. When he entered Makkah a few days prior to Hajj, more than 100,000 Muslims were with him on this historic journey. During his last and only Hajj, the noble Messenger (ﷺ) not only eradicated many *jāhili* practices that had crept into the performance of this highly symbolic act of *ibādah* but also delivered his historic *khuṭbah*, known as *Khuṭbah Ḥajjah al-Wadā'* (Sermon of the Farewell Pilgrimage).

It is to this *khuṭbah*, a version of which is presented in Exhibit 23, that we now turn our attention. The Prophet's (ﷺ) Farewell Message cannot technically be characterized as a letter or a treaty like all of his other documents and communiques covered in this book. However, metaphorically, it can be said that the last *khuṭbah* was a letter to the Ummah, past and present, "*Let the attendee communicate this to the absentee. There may be cases in which those who listen to this message from you will understand it better than some of you [who listened to it in person] understand it.*" Just as he sent letters to kings, princes, and heads of state to invite them to Islam, and just as he enacted treaties with the residents of Madinah and its neighboring power factions to consolidate and strengthen the Islamic power base, the Prophet (ﷺ) — in his final act as a mercy to all mankind and as the greatest measure of Allah's (ﷻ) grace — listed for the Muslims of the Ummah the most important aspects of the *dīn* they had accepted, sacrificed themselves for, and fought to make victorious over all other man-made systems of oppression and injustice.

The Prophet's (ﷺ) final words can and have probably been analyzed from many points of view, filling many volumes in the 14 centuries since he stood for the last time on Jabal al-Raḥmah in front of the flock he had so carefully cultivated in the 23 years of His prophetic mission. But the subject of this book concerns the power dimensions of the Sirah and so the bulk of the commentary

**Exhibit 23** – Text of the Prophet’s (ﷺ) Farewell Khutbah.

Appreciation and praise is due to Allah; we thank Him, we ask for His help, and we beg His pardon, and we repent to him, and we seek Allah’s refuge [safeguard, haven, security] from our own transgressions and wrongdoings. Whoever Allah guides has no one to misguide him; and whoever He misguides has no one to guide him. And I bear witness [testify] that there is no divinity/authority except Allah, the Only, having no rival [in dominion and authority]; and I bear witness [testify] that Muhammad is His subject and apostle.

O subjects of Allah, I counsel you to be vigilant of Allah’s power [and corrective justice], and I prevail upon you to obey Him, and I begin my speech with [the following] words of advice. And thus,

O people! Listen to me. I will clarify some things for you, for I do not know whether I will meet with you after this year in this capacity.

O people! Indeed your lives, and your possessions, and your family honor [womenfolk] are sacrosanct until you meet your Lord, [the same] as the sanctity of this, your day, in this, your month, in this, your country — have I not conveyed [the message]; O Allah, bear witness.

And whoever is holding a trust is required to return it to its proprietor.

And the *ribā* [usury] of *jāhiliyah* is disestablished, “...but what belongs to you is your principal, thereby you are not taking advantage of anyone, nor are you taken advantage of” (2:279). Allah has decreed that there be no *ribā*. And the first *ribā* I [begin abolishing] is the *ribā* of my uncle al-‘Abbās ibn ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib.

And the blood contentions [reciprocal vengeance] of

*jāhiliyah* are disestablished; and the first blood contention I [begin abolishing] is that of ‘Āmir ibn Rabī‘ah ibn al-Ḥārith ibn ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib.

And the legacies [standards, norms, conventions] of *jāhiliyah* are disestablished except for the upkeep of the House [the whole area around the Ka‘bah and Masjid al-Ḥarām] and offering water [to the pilgrims] in those precincts.

Murder has its redress [*qiṣās*], and for he who is accidentally [unintentionally] killed by a club or a stone, the compensation is 100 camels. And whoever increases [this compensation] belongs to [the tradition of] *jāhiliyah* — have I not conveyed [the message]; O Allah, bear witness.

And thus, O people! Satan has given up being [openly] revered [idolized] in your country here, therefore he will be content in being obeyed in matters less than that — matters related to your own deeds that you may regard to be trivial — so be careful of him in matters of your *dīn*.

O people! **“The intercalation [of months] is but one more instance of [their] refusal to acknowledge the truth — [a means] by which those who are bent on denying the truth are led further astray. They declare this [intercalation] to be permissible in one year and forbidden in [another] year, in order to conform [outwardly] to the number of months which Allah has hallowed: and thus they make allowable what Allah has forbidden...”** [9:37] and they forbid what Allah has allowed. Timekeeping [pertaining to the progression of months during the year] now is in synchrony with [its order] when the celestial spheres and the Earth were created by Allah. And **“Behold, the number of months, in the sight of Allah, is twelve months, [laid down] in Allah’s decree on the day when He created the heavens and the earth; [and] out of these, four are sacred,”** [9:36] three of

them are consecutive and one is solitary: Dhū al-Qa'dah, Dhū al-Hijjah, and al-Muḥarram; and the Rajab of Muḍar, which is between Jumādā and Sha'bān — have I not conveyed [the message]; O Allah, bear witness.

And thus, O people! Indeed your womenfolk have rights over you; and you have rights over them. Your [referring to men] right over them [referring to women] is that they shall not be unfaithful [have sexual intercourse with other men] to you, and they shall not permit anyone to enter your homes without your permission, and they shall not commit any openly indecent acts; but if they did, then Allah has permitted you to constrain them, and to leave them alone in bed, and to nudge them without hurting them; and if they desist and comply with you, then you are responsible for their livelihoods and their wardrobes within reason. And counsel each other [referring to men] pertaining to the well-being of women, for when they are in your care, they need your reinforcement [to be concerned about their welfare] for they are vulnerable; and you have taken them [in marriage] in accordance with Allah's trust, and it was by Allah's word that you are intimate with them [meaning sexual intercourse]. Therefore, be conscious of Allah's authority and power when it comes to women. And counsel each other [referring to men] pertaining to their well-being — have I not conveyed [the message]; O Allah, bear witness.

O people! Indeed committed Muslims are brethren. And no person may lawfully take his brother's possessions except with his endorsement — have I not conveyed [the message]; O Allah, bear witness.

And do not, after I am gone, regress into *kufṛ*, some of you decapitating others, for I have left with you that which



if you put into action, you will never go wrong: the Book of Allah and the Sunnah of His Prophet. O people! Indeed I have left you with that which if you put into action, you will never go wrong: the Book of Allah and my devout household — have I not conveyed [the message]; O Allah, bear witness.

O people! Indeed your Sustainer is One, and your common father [referring to Adam] is one. All of you belong to Adam and Adam was made up of earth [soil]. The most honorable of you in Allah's sight is the one who is the most conscious of Allah's power and authority; and an Arab [one who is conversant in Arabic] has no preference over a non-Arab [one who is not conversant in Arabic] except in the degree of consciousness of Allah's power and authority — have I not conveyed [the message]; O Allah, bear witness.

[They — the attendees — said, "Yes." And then, he said], Let the attendee communicate this to the absentee. There may be cases in which those who listen to this message from you will understand it better than some of you [who listened to it in person] understand it.

O people! Indeed Allah has allocated for every inheritor his share of the inheritance. An inheritor is not entitled to a bequest, and a bequest cannot exceed one-third of the total inheritance. A newborn's lineage derives from his [biological parents]; and those who produce offspring outside of the bounds of marriage are to be confined. Whoever disavows his father's lineage and whoever betrays his guardian, then upon him is the condemnation of Allah, the angels, and all people. No rationale or distracting argument for a substitute is acceptable [in the matter of transferring lineage or guardians].

And peace be unto you all.<sup>2</sup>

here on the Farewell Message will be limited to how it relates to the Prophet's (ﷺ) exercise of power and authority, and the final advice he gave to the gathered Muslims to do the same in a just and *mut-taqī* way. Under the aegis of this important consideration, a reading of the Prophet's (ﷺ) Farewell Message suggests that he addressed in a broad way three major themes: cultivation of the Islamic personality, economic justice, and social justice.

From the tone and gravity of the Prophet's (ﷺ) words, these three themes are obviously very tightly intertwined and no person other than the Prophet (ﷺ) himself could have so succinctly, comprehensively, and expertly composed all three into an Islamic program of action that can be easily remembered by all those who choose to accept the great responsibility of carrying this *dīn* to all and sundry. There can be no social justice without the economic equilibration that leads to a classless society and without the nurturing of a lifestyle active in the pursuit, establishment, maintenance, and adjudication of justice. Similarly, there can be no economic justice in a racially divided society where wealth only circulates in the hands of the privileged aristocratic few who manipulate the law to immunize themselves from accountability and redress to the perpetually downtrodden and desperate, generally belonging to a "servant" race, whose labors lead to little more than sustaining the oppressively lopsided condition. And so on.

Note that in the Farewell Message, the Prophet (ﷺ) never chose to address the attendees with *yā ayyuhā al-ladhīna āmanū* (O committed Muslims), the form of address that was used by Allah (ﷻ) in Madinah. Rather, he returned to the form of address that was common when he was communicating the message in Makkah during the first 13 years of his mission: *yā ayyuhā al-nās* (O people). This preference not only maintained continuity with the chronological revelation of the Scripture, but also affirmed the universal and inclusivist character of Makkah as well as the universal and inclusivist character of the Last Messenger's (ﷺ) mission. He was sent to deliver the good news and admonitions to all humanity, Muslim as well as non-Muslim, and he was using the occasion to address those gathered, many of whom had not yet made a firm commitment to Allah

(ﷺ), as such. Thus the Prophet (ﷺ) was letting the Muslims, who were accompanying him on his last Hajj, know that just as he had the responsibility of passing on the guidance to them, they now had the responsibility to pass on the divine counsel to the rest of humanity in the model, the method, and the deportment he had demonstrated. And so on this occasion he would give them some pointers in order to facilitate and ease the process of dissemination.

Throughout the entire Farewell Message, the underlying thread that binds all three themes together is the changeover from *jāhiliyah* as a human reference point to Allah (ﷻ) and His Messenger, “*And the legacies [standards, norms, conventions] of jāhiliyah are disestablished except for the upkeep of the House...*” This means that with the completion of the Qur’anic revelation and the final advices the Prophet (ﷺ) was giving to the Ummah on this occasion, potentially all of humanity was deliverable from all forms and nuances of *jāhiliyah* — its systems, its support structures, its administrative mechanisms, its rationalizations, its foundations, and its culture. The transformative model the Prophet (ﷺ) had painstakingly demonstrated and developed to eradicate *jāhiliyah* in the Peninsula, and more specifically in Makkah, was potentially exportable to other parts of the world so that the rest of humanity could be liberated from the (unjust and oppressive) rule of man. The Prophet (ﷺ) was not saying that *jāhiliyah* was finished once and for all, and for all times to come. The obvious implication in his final words is that *jāhiliyah* can make a very strong comeback if the Muslims withdraw from their commitment to Allah (ﷻ) and shirk their responsibilities as the human vanguard of mankind. What he *was* saying, however, is that anytime and any place humanity finds itself in the throes of the constriction, oppression, racism, and slavery characteristic of *jāhiliyah*, it can always rely on this demonstrably effective (Islamic) program for deliverance. The Prophet (ﷺ) showed the committed Muslims, and thereby all humanity, how to do it — to this purpose he was sent. From that point forward, the life-giving Qur’an would be there for all times to come, as a gift from Allah (ﷻ), and coupled with the Prophet’s (ﷺ) Sunnah and Sīrah, the program of Islamic liberation would be intensely practi-

cal. True, the unreserved commitment to Allah (ﷻ) by a critical mass of Muslims would require struggle and sacrifice, whether at that time or today, but in the end no fruit could be sweeter.

### Economic Justice

Two aspects of the Farewell Message deal specifically with economic justice: a bequest to an heir, and *ribā* (usury). In this section, we will deal briefly with *ribā* and leave the bequest to a later discussion,

*And the ribā of jāhiliyah is disestablished, “...but what belongs to you is your principal, thereby you are not taking advantage of anyone, nor are you taken advantage of” (2:279). Allah has decreed that there be no ribā. And the first ribā I [begin abolishing] is the ribā of my uncle al-‘Abbās ibn ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib.*

In a world where *ribā* penetrates into the most ordinary transactions of everyday life, and where the *ribā* portion of any loan contract is always paid before the principal, it ought to come as no surprise that in such a world, Muslims have no power. Muslims are supposed to be the human executors of social and economic justice on earth, and part of this responsibility requires them to demolish all institutions of the slavery of men to other men — racism, imperialism, Zionism, capitalism, corporatism, sexism, and any other type of *‘aṣabiyah*. And *ribā* is nothing but debt slavery. If prostitution is the oldest profession, then certainly the injection of *ribā* into financial transactions is a close second. Ever since man has used money as a measure of wealth and as a medium of exchange for all kinds of transactions that involve buying and selling, the practice of concentrating wealth in the hands of a select few through the introduction and proliferation of *ribā* has been around. It is the oldest running program of institutional oppression, and because those who have been running this program are so influential in society so as to rationalize this in the minds of the oppressed and to socialize them into the belief that no better way exists, the program contin-

ues unfettered from generation to generation, sidelined only from time to time by the appearance of a prophet,

**And heretofore whenever We sent, before your time, a warner to any community, those of its people who had lost themselves entirely in the pursuit of pleasures [the capital class] would always say, “Behold, we found our forefathers agreed on a directional course and, verily, it is but in their footsteps that we follow!” [Whereupon each prophet] would say, “Why, even though I bring you guidance better than that which you found your forefathers conforming to?” [To which] they [of the capital class] would reply, “Behold, we deny that there is any truth in [what you claim to be] your messages!” (43:23–24).**

Because this ongoing *ribā* program and its associated institutions of racism, materialism, consumerism, and militarism have been so pervasive, and because they are created and backed by the most powerful, wealthy, and corrupt elements of society for their own benefit, Allah (ﷻ) spends the better part of the longest *sūrah*s in the Qur’an showing Muslims and all those committed to issues of truth and justice how to decommission the program as well as those who prop it up. Were it not for this liberating Qur’an and the *Sīrah* of Allah’s Prophet (ﷺ), man would have been convinced long ago to endorse his own captivity (as he does today) because the sheer weight of the human intellectual arguments in support of this program, despite their emptiness, is enough to drown out any counter. And the ones who have the wealth capacity to finance the academic rationalizations are themselves the executors of the program; they have a self “interest” involved. Man is prone to be oppressed into inactivity, apathy, and forgetfulness, and for this reason, Allah (ﷻ) constantly reinforces what his responsibilities are in the longer *sūrah*s so that he gains enough confidence to reverse the injustice Ahl al-Kitāb has thrived on for millenia.

This is not an easy task, because *ribā* is not a minor issue. Most wars in history and the majority of the hot wars going on today are

fought either to preserve the class differentiation that is sustained by economic disequilibrium, or to reverse it.

**And the Yahūd say, “Allah’s hand is shackled!” It is their own hands that are shackled; and rejected [by Allah] are they because of this their assertion. Nay, but wide are His hands stretched out: He dispenses [bounty] as He wills. But all that has been bestowed from on high upon you [O Prophet] by your Sustainer is bound to make many of them yet more stubborn in their overweening arrogance and in their denial of the truth. And so We have cast enmity and hatred among them [Jews and Christians], [to last] until the Day of Resurrection; every time they light the fires of war, Allah extinguishes them; and they labor hard to spread corruption on earth; and Allah does not love the spreaders of corruption (5:64).**

*Ribā* is the chief driver in polarizing resources in the direction of a capital or luxury class. When all peaceful methods fail to redress this disequilibrium, the ordinary people must resort to violence in the form of revolution or war. One may even go so far as to suggest that were *ribā* not to exist in an institutional way out in the open so to speak, the majority of the reasons for going to war would be eliminated, along with all the displacement, instability, humiliation, and dispossession that are a part of the theater of war.

In order to better understand what is practically meant by these assertions, let us consider the most recent poverty statistics and the reasons behind the war being fought for the “liberation” of Libya in the Arab Spring of 2011.<sup>3</sup> The data cited in Exhibit 24 describes the impact of the polarization of wealth on the people of the world. Regardless of how one defines “poverty” or “poor country,” the data is appalling; the most striking is the following, “...for every \$1 in aid a developing country receives, over \$25 is spent on debt repayment; the poorer the country, the more likely it is that debt repayments are being extracted directly from people who nei-

**Exhibit 24** – Poverty facts and statistics, 2005–2006.<sup>5</sup>

**Distance between rich and poor**

- almost half the world — over 3 billion people — lives on less than \$2.50/person/day; at least 5.2 billion live on less than \$10/person/day.
- the wealthiest 20% of the world accounted for 76.6% of total private consumption. The poorest fifth just 1.5%; the poorest 10% accounted for just 0.5% and the wealthiest 10% accounted for 59% of all the consumption.
- the GDP of the world's poorest countries (567 million people) is less than the wealth of the world's 7 richest people combined.
- world GDP of a population approximately of 6.5 billion in 2006 was \$48.2 trillion; the world's wealthiest countries (approx. 1 billion people) accounted for \$36.6 trillion (76%); the world's billionaires — just 497 people (approximately 0.000008% of the world's population) — were worth \$3.5 trillion (over 7% of world GDP); low income countries (2.4 billion people) accounted for just \$1.6 trillion of GDP (3.3%).
- the poorest 40% accounts for 5% of global income. The richest 20% accounts for 75% of world income.
- an analysis of long-term trends shows the distance between the richest and poorest countries was about,
  - 3:1 in 1820
  - 11:1 in 1913
  - 35:1 in 1950
  - 44:1 in 1973

72:1 in 1992

100:1 in 2010 (projected)

- more than 80% of the world's population lives in countries where income differentials are widening.

### **Children**

- number of children in the world: 2.2 billion; number in poverty: 1 billion (every second child); 22,000 children die each day due to poverty.
- 27–28% of all children in developing countries are estimated to be underweight or stunted.
- 1.8 million children die each year as a result of diarrhea; millions more die because of manageable and curable health concerns.
- less than 1% of what the world spent every year on weapons was needed to put every child into school by the year 2000 and yet it did not happen.

### **Water**

- 1.1 billion people in developing countries have inadequate access to water; 2.6 billion lack basic sanitation.
- almost two in three people lacking access to clean water survive on less than \$2 a day, with one in three living on less than \$1 a day; more than 660 million people without sanitation live on less than \$2 a day, and more than 385 million on less than \$1 a day.
- 12% of the world's population uses 85% of its water, and these 12% do not live in the Third World.



- 1.8 billion people who have access to a water source within 1 km, but not in their house or yard, consume around 20 liters/day. In the UK the average person uses over 50 liters/day flushing toilets. The highest average water use in the world is in the US, at 600 liters/day.
- close to half of all people in developing countries who have a given health problem at any time suffer this because of water and sanitation deficits.
- millions of women spend several hours a day collecting water. To these human costs can be added the massive economic waste associated with the water and sanitation deficit, the costs associated with health spending, productivity losses and labor diversions. These costs are greatest in some of the poorest countries.

### Electricity

- 1.6 billion people — 25% of humanity — live without electricity, 1.25 billion of which are in South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa.

### Global priorities (\$US in billions)

- cosmetics in the US ..... 8
- ice cream in Europe ..... 11
- perfumes in Europe and the US ..... 12
- pet foods in Europe and the US ..... 17
- business entertainment in Japan ..... 35
- cigarettes in Europe ..... 50
- alcoholic drinks in Europe ..... 105
- narcotics and illegal drugs in the world ..... 400
- military spending in the world ..... 780
- total ..... 1,418

**Global needs (universal access to basic social services)**

- basic education for all . . . . . 6
  - water and sanitation for all . . . . . 9
  - reproductive health for all women . . . . . 12
  - basic health and nutrition . . . . . 13
  - **total (0.03% of total of global priorities) . . . . . 40**
- for every \$1 in aid a developing country receives, over \$25 is spent on debt repayment; the poorer the country, the more likely it is that debt repayments are being extracted directly from people who neither contracted the loans nor received any of the money.
  - nearly a billion people entered the 21st century unable to read a book or sign their names.

ther contracted the loans nor received any of the money.” Who of the so-called representatives of the poor countries are contracting these kinds of loans? Is it proper to call them “representatives?” And who in the wealthy countries, which “give” these predatory loans, feel that such contracts are just and honorable? And how much of the resources of these poor people, which could have been used to improve their condition if a just price had been levied, have been robbed by those who also take \$24 in *ribā* for every dollar they lend? Where is all of this wealth going? And finally, why do these countries (the G-8 countries), who after stealing this wealth from the poor, themselves have an external debt of over 54 trillion?<sup>4</sup> To whom is this debt owed? *Ribā* is a primary source of the concentration of wealth that leads to a concentration of corrupt power, à la the imperialist West and Zionist Israel. Anyone who allows his culture, history, social institutions, and infrastructure to be destroyed by these types and then turns around and accepts monies from the

same to rebuild is setting himself up for an occupation that may not abate for centuries.

How are these usurious tyrannies maintained through war? Consider the case of Libya today. First of all, the idea that the Western imperialist intervention into the domestic situation in Libya to protect Libyan civilians from a dictator gone mad is unadulterated fabrication and opportunism. For those who are attuned to reading between the lines, the Libyan “revolution” just does not fit with all the other indigenous civil uprisings (Tunisia, Egypt, Bahrain, Yemen, etc.) that have taken place in the area. A dead give-away in this regard concerns why the Libyan revolutionaries would decide to set up an independent central bank in the rebel stronghold in Benghazi, and appoint its governor-general. Creating a central bank is generally not on the short list of priorities for those who are in the initial stages of rescuing a country and its people from tyranny, despotism, and corruption. And so there is obviously more going on here than is seen in the “reporting” of the mainstream media; there is a lot more to this haphazard group of hastily assembled “rebels;” and there is much more to be said about how the power of central bankers in today’s world rivals that of governments and militaries, or more precisely, how the power of central bankers is exercised through the agency of governments and their militaries.

A quick perusal of Libya before its own civil unrest shows that the Libyan people, compared to their contemporaries in Egypt, Tunisia, Yemen, Bahrain, Jordan, and Syria, are much better off economically, especially in view of the fact that the other civil uprisings have been focused on expanding jobs and opportunities. Per thousand people, Libya is the most literate country in Africa; it provides free healthcare and education for all its people, and completely subsidizes all students who go abroad; infant mortality rates are also the lowest in Africa, due in no small measure to some of the best medical and diagnostic equipment in the entire Muslim East. Food, gasoline, and automobiles are affordable and cheap enough for nearly every family; no taxes are levied on those who engage in agriculture and all recently married couples are entitled

to receive \$50,000 in no-interest government assistance — with no time limit to pay back the loans. Libya is also self-sufficient with regard to water and energy. Water independence is not a small feat in an essentially arid, mostly desert country, but because of the \$33 billion Great Man-Made River Project, which pumps water from underground aquifers in the south of the country to population centers in the north, 70% of the people's fresh water needs for drinking and irrigation are satisfied.<sup>6</sup> So economic deprivation cannot be a reason to justify a popular revolt that invites in the well-known (by now) vulturistic imperial powers to assist in taking over the mechanisms and agencies of state.

Some analysts have suggested that the NATO-led invasion of Libya has to do with opening up its high-grade, low-sulfur content crude oil fields to exploitation by multinational oil corporations. But since Libya currently only supplies 2% of the world's oil needs, this reason for launching an all-out invasion and potential occupation seems to be problematic. To get a handle on what might have precipitated Western military action against Qaddafi, we would have to go back to the catalyst behind the occupation of Iraq in 2003. Six months before the US invasion, Saddam Hussein had threatened to begin selling his oil in return for euros, not dollars, thereby endangering the position of the dollar as the world's reserve currency, and also threatening world financial markets given that all other currencies and markets are measured against the strength of the US economy and its (petro) dollar currency. Was Qaddafi going to do something similar that caused French president, Nicolas Sarkozy, to inveigh that Qaddafi was a threat to the financial security of mankind?<sup>7</sup> A little hyperbolic and hysterical, is it not? Or is it? How is it possible for a country that only accounts for 0.13% of the world's GDP to be a threat to global financial security? Listen to what Ellen Brown, president of the Public Banking Institute and author of *Web of Debt*, says about it,

Qaddafi made a similarly bold move: he initiated a movement to refuse the dollar and the euro, and called on Arab and African nations to use a new currency

instead, the gold *dīnār*. Qaddafi suggested establishing a united African continent, with its 200 million people using this single currency. During the past year, the idea was approved by many Arab countries and most African countries... The initiative was viewed negatively by the USA and the European Union... but Qaddafi was not swayed and continued his push for the creation of a united Africa.

And that brings us back to the puzzle of the Libyan central bank. In an article posted on the *Market Oracle*, Eric Encina observed,

One seldom mentioned fact by western politicians and media pundits: the Central Bank of Libya is 100% state owned... Currently, the Libyan government creates its own money, the Libyan Dinar, through the facilities of its own central bank. Few can argue that Libya is a sovereign nation with its own great resources, able to sustain its own economic destiny. One major problem for globalist banking cartels is that in order to do business with Libya, they must go through the Libyan Central Bank and its national currency, a place where they have absolutely zero domination or power-broking [sic] ability. Hence, taking down the Central Bank of Libya (CBL) may not appear in the speeches of Obama, Cameron and Sarkozy but this is certainly at the top of the globalist agenda for absorbing Libya into its hive of compliant nations.

Libya not only has oil. According to the IMF, its central bank has nearly 144 tons of gold in its vaults. With that sort of asset base, who needs the BIS [Bank of International Settlements],<sup>8</sup> the IMF and their rules?

All of which prompts a closer look at the BIS rules and their effect on local economies. An article on the BIS website states that central banks in the Central Bank Governance Network are supposed to have as their single or primary objective “to preserve price stability.” They are to be kept independent from government to make sure that political considerations don’t interfere with this mandate. “Price stability” means maintaining a stable money supply, even if that means burdening the people with heavy foreign debts. Central banks are discouraged from increasing the money supply by printing money and using it for the benefit of the state, either directly or as loans.

In a 2002 article in *Asia Times* titled “The BIS vs. National Banks,” Henry Liu maintained,

BIS regulations serve only the single purpose of strengthening the international private banking system, even at the peril of national economies. The BIS does to national banking systems what the IMF has done to national monetary regimes. National economies under financial globalization no longer serve national interests.

...FDI [foreign direct investment] denominated in foreign currencies, mostly dollars, has condemned many national economies into unbalanced development toward export, merely to make dollar-denominated interest payments to FDI, with little net benefit to the domestic economies.

He added, “Applying the State Theory of Money, any government can fund with its own currency all its domestic developmental needs to maintain full employment without inflation.” The “state theory of money”

refers to money created by governments rather than private banks.

The presumption of the rule against borrowing from the government's own central bank is that this will be inflationary, while borrowing existing money from foreign banks or the IMF will not. But all banks actually create the money they lend on their books, whether publicly-owned or privately-owned. Most new money today comes from bank loans. Borrowing it from the government's own central bank has the advantage that the loan is effectively interest-free. Eliminating interest has been shown to reduce the cost of public projects by an average of 50%... Libya's wholly state-owned bank can and does issue the national currency and lend it for state purposes.

So is this new war all about oil or all about banking? Maybe both — and water as well. With energy, water, and ample credit to develop the infrastructure to access them, a nation can be free of the grip of foreign creditors. And that may be the real threat of Libya: it could show the world what is possible. Most countries don't have oil, but new technologies are being developed that could make non-oil-producing nations energy-independent, particularly if infrastructure costs are halved by borrowing from the nation's own publicly-owned bank. Energy independence would free governments from the web of the international bankers, and of the need to shift production from domestic to foreign markets to service the loans.

If the Qaddafi government goes down, it will be interesting to watch whether the new central bank joins the BIS, whether the nationalized oil industry gets sold off to investors, and whether education and healthcare continue to be free.”<sup>9</sup>

None of the aforementioned comments is meant to register any encomiums for Libyan dictator, Muammar Qaddafi, and his ilk

in the Muslim East. This writer is on record in numerous articles and public appearances in condemning and delegitimizing those who usurp power by force without the consent of those they intend to govern. Nonetheless, the truth must be brought to light regardless of where it lies. Qaddafi, for all practical purposes, is nothing more than a blister on the back of a corporate, imperialist mammoth that merely uses him to expand its dominion in the region, and the remarks above illustrate this modality. What is clear is that an international cartel of banks “creates” money from debt, which is heavily leveraged on the weak and the powerless (*the mustaḍʿafīn*) as *ribā* payments that never go away. This means that in order for *ribā* (usury) to survive as an integral part of financial networks, a societal class hierarchy must be fostered — by necessity. Were it not for the labors and resources of the billions of downtrodden, the artificially created debt generated by the few money-lenders and power-moguls could never be paid. And those in charge of brokering this system into the lives of ordinary people will fight wars in order to maintain it. This is why Allah (ﷻ) and His Prophet (ﷺ) declared a counter war on the *ribā*-barons,

Those who gorge themselves on *ribā* [usury] behave as he who has been confounded by the touch of Satan, for they say, “Buying and selling is but a kind of usury” — the while Allah has made buying and selling lawful and usury unlawful. Hence, whoever becomes aware of his Sustainer’s admonition, and thereupon desists [from usury], may keep his past gains, and it will be for Allah to judge him; but as for those who return to it, they are destined for the Fire, therein to abide!

Allah deprives usurious gains of all blessing, whereas He blesses charitable deeds with manifold increase. And Allah does not love anyone who is stubbornly ingrate and persists in sinful ways. Verily, those who are faithfully secure in their commitment [to Allah] and do good works, and have made *ṣalāh* the standard [of life], and [institutionalized] the dispersion of char-



itable givings — they shall have their reward with their Sustainer, and no fear need they have, and neither shall they grieve.

O you who are faithfully secure in your commitment [to Allah]! Remain on guard regarding Allah's [power], and give up all outstanding gains from usury, if you are [truly] committed [to Allah]; for if you do not, then know that you are at war with Allah and His Apostle. But if you repent, then you shall be entitled to [the return of] your principal; you will do no wrong, and neither will you be wronged (2:275–279).

*Ribā* (usury) is the complete opposite of *ṣadaqah*, which is an act of human compassion, generosity, brotherly cooperation, and social security. *Ribā*, on the other hand is an act of human greed, a breakdown in brotherly relations, an exploitation of others' suffering and hardship, and a commercialization of social interactions. *Ṣadaqah* is money that goes from the "haves" to the "have nots" with an anticipation of Allah's (ﷻ) reward. *Ribā* is the extraction of funds from the poor by the rich. *Ribā* is debt slavery. Why? Because the *ribā* portion of a debt can never be repaid and the majority of what goes for money in circulation in the modern world is denominated debt (privately issued bank "credit"), not a medium to register and record the exchange value of transactions.

Most people think that money is issued by a government and that banks lend money on the strength of deposits made by its customers and shareholders. This would mean that the aggregate amount of all loans issuable by a particular bank would be limited by the aggregate amount of hard assets the bank has on deposit. This is not true. In fact, in modern "democratic" and capitalist societies where the money supply is regulated by central banks, most of which are private corporations (meaning that they are beholden not to the people, but to their shareholders), only 5% of the money in circulation is issued by the government; the rest of the 95% is pledges of repayment (promissory notes) from people and companies who contracted loans from banks.

A borrower's pledge to repay a loan has real value because the borrower's labor and property is the collateral, and thus a promissory note becomes a portable, exchangeable, and saleable piece of paper; and because this promissory note has real value, it can be used as money. In exchange for his promise to repay, a bank will issue the borrower a private credit that is represented legally by government fiat currency, that is, paper dollars or the like (euros, riyals, pounds, marks, yens, etc.). Without the pledge of repayment, the banks would have nothing to lend, and thus there would be no reason to represent the debt with fiat currency. Therefore, in this centralized banking system, if there is no debt, there will be no money.

How does privately-issued bank credit become currency endorsed by the government as legal tender for all public and private financial transactions? When a bank contracts a loan to a customer, it creates the money out of thin air by simply registering an amount due in the borrower's account. In return the bank gets a repayment promise from the borrower, a promise that is backed up with collateral such as a house, car, jewelry, or other things of value. Banks are able to legally engage in this fraud because of the so-called *fractional reserve requirements*, which only require the banks to have 10% of the loan amount on hand as actual assets or deposits.<sup>10</sup> In reverse, this means that banks can loan up to nine times whatever they have in the form of assets or real deposits from their patrons. As the banks lend, customers transact the money and then redeposit it back into the same banks, albeit from different hands. Thus, upon a \$100,000 worth of real deposits, say in gold, a bank can loan over \$8.5 million, the majority of which has absolutely no value whatsoever (other than the original \$100,000). Germane is the fact that \$8.4 million of these loans never existed as real assets; however people are expected, once they sign a promissory note, to pay back the debt with interest! And if you can, through a whole bunch of convoluted and complicated explanations, get people to agree with this scam, you can get rich quickly by only lifting your finger to get a borrower to sign on the bottom line of a bogus loan contract. This fractional reserve banking system is now the de facto banking system of the world.

As pressure on governments from powerful capitalists increases to deregulate financial markets (that is, to allow speculation on food and energy, and to “relax” the 9:1 fractional reserve ratio), banks will be allowed to create as much money as people can borrow (this is what the sub-prime mortgage crisis was all about) with the result that the buying power of each denomination of currency diminishes more and more, ultimately becoming virtually worthless. Debt is necessary for the system to survive, and servicing this debt naturally fuels the unremitting transfer of wealth from those who have less to those who have more. In essence, banks do not *lend* money; they simply *create* it from debt; and to the extent that debt can become seemingly unlimited, so can the supply of money along with its depreciating value. This is the genesis of *inflation*. Monetary inflation, which is the practice of artificially expanding the money supply, produces money in the form of paper that is not collateralized by anything of intrinsic value. Monetary inflation necessarily leads to a decrease in purchasing power of the basic unit of currency that is being inflated. Today, the dollar buys about one-sixteenth as much as it did 65 years ago.

Finally, no matter how hard someone may try, paying debt effectively means paying only the principal part of the debt, not the usury. When a bank issues a loan, it only creates money for the principal, not the interest that has to be paid on it. The fact of the matter is that the interest on *ribā-loans* can never be paid off completely. As the debt ceiling increases with the proliferation of money that has no intrinsic value, the accruing interest becomes more and more of an insurmountable hurdle that no society, past or present, has ever been able to overstep. Even if some people, not all, are successful in paying back the principal as well as the interest, the effect of usury on their business processes as well as the value of their earnings is wide-ranging and far-reaching. One writer says the following,

Creating new money out of nothing is, of course, an illusion. As we follow this thread of events we will see that ultimately, the rest of society over an unknown number

of generations is held responsible for trying to pay the usury part of a collective debt that is impossible to pay...

Where did the money... come from that was used to pay the usury part of the loan? If it came from borrowing more money, then the borrower's total debt just got larger due to additional usury. If it came from providing goods and services to customers, then the prices of those goods and services had to be high enough to provide reasonable earnings to the borrower. This means that the borrower passed on to customers the cost of usury.

But earnings can never increase fast enough to keep pace with usury so long as new loans with new usury components continue to be introduced into the money supply chain. Every such new loan has an inflationary impact on earnings. This puts pressure on organizations to try to find ways to reduce costs in order to make present earnings fulfill their needs. Higher unemployment frequently is one of the outcomes.<sup>11</sup>

The entire money-lending scheme based on fractional reserve dogma works to the favor of the money-lenders, who ultimately end up with all the wealth, and when people begin to foreclose on their homes and properties, the money-lenders end up with all the property as well. At any point in past history, whenever society allowed a group of wealthy money-lenders to issue loans with usury, it gradually saw all of its money being transferred to the money-lenders. Usury is an age-old mechanism that facilitates the transfer of wealth from the working class to the luxury class; the fractional reserve system — instrumental in interweaving usury transactions into every aspect of ordinary peoples' lives, so much so that few even question if there is a better and more equitable approach — is the modern incarnation of this age-old deception.

This exploitative financial system could never last if government was not actively involved as a partner with special interest. It is government that legalizes and regulates — or deregulates — the practice of creating credit from non-existing assets. It is a govern-

ment partnership with financiers that has resulted in the fractional reserve requirements. It is a government partnership with the central bank that gives an emergency infusion of paper money to local banks in the event of a run on the banks (this is the same as the nearly \$2 trillion bank bailout of the financial sector in the US during the 2008–2009 financial crisis). It is the government that legalizes the conversion of private bank credit to government issued fiat currency, which has no intrinsic value. It is the government that passes legal tender laws, forcing citizens to accept this fiat currency as a vehicle to satisfy all debt obligations. It is government courts that enforce the repayment of debts. It is the government that passes laws to protect the monetary system's functionality and credibility with the public. And finally, it is the government that levies taxes on interest income of any kind. Not holding iron-fisted and exploitative governments accountable has now become part of Christian theology. Ever since they failed to punish the government and its Yahūdī enablers that together persecuted and allegedly (according to them) nailed Jesus (ﷺ) to the cross, they have not only allowed satanic and atheistic governments to get away with murder, but they have rationalized a partnership with them to explain away their genocidal occupations of native and Muslim peoples as part of a Christian civilizational mission.

This section on economic justice would be incomplete without citing the influence of the Yahūd and their illegitimate and racist state monstrosity, Israel. The problems they gave the Prophet (ﷺ), who did not seek to agitate them in any way, have already been covered to some extent earlier in this book. In regard to *ribā* and the economic and financial institutions that sustain it, they are the ones who have historically provided the ideological force behind the arguments in favor of this wretchedly cruel and divinely proscribed practice. They managed and proliferated such transactions in Madinah, and today they dominate on Wall Street and in financial markets; in the legal profession so that they can ingratiate themselves to would-be capitalists and the politicians in their pockets by sneaking them through loopholes to circumvent moral accountability; in the mainstream media so that they can socialize the people

into accepting this as a fact of life; and in academia so that they can produce experts and pundits who parse the law and marginalize the guidance that comes to humanity from Allah (ﷻ), making it an uninteresting and irrelevant afterthought. It is true that the local Arabians participated in this financial fraud with their Yahūdī handlers, and we are not acquitting them here, but they were reflexively and opportunistically involved in a scheme they had given no thought to, just as the millions who are similarly involved today. Allah (ﷻ) says about those who organize the big lie,

**Behold! they who spread the slander are a gang among you. Deem it not a bad thing for you; say, it is good for you. Unto every man of them [will be paid] that which he has earned of the sin; and as for him among them who had the greater share therein, his will be an awful doom (24:11).**

Numerous other *āyāt* in the divine Text have condemned the Yahūd for their recalcitrant behaviors, not the least of which is the murder of Prophets (ﷺ) who tried to put a stop to their financial and moral depravity. They are even taken to task by justice-minded and conscience-laden individuals from amongst their own, usually deprecated as “self-hating Jews.” Gilad Atzmon, a Jew who calls himself an Israeli refusenik, says the following,

We learn from the press and political analysts that, against all odds and in spite of the global financial turmoil, Israel’s economy is booming. Some even suggest that Israel is one of the strongest economies around.

“How come?” you may ask; besides maybe avocado, oranges, and some Dead Sea beauty products, none of us has actually ever seen an Israeli product on the shelves. They don’t make cars; nor do they make electric or electronic appliances, and they hardly manufacture any consumer goods... In the land they grabbed by force from the indigenous Palestinians, they are yet to find any

lucrative minerals or oil. So what is it? How is it that Israel is impervious to the global financial disaster? How can Israel be so rich?

Israel may be rich because, according to the *Guardian*, “out of the seven oligarchs who controlled 50% of Russia’s economy during the 1990s, six were Jews.” During the last two decades, many Russian oligarchs have acquired Israeli citizenship. They also secured their dirty money by investing in the kosher financial haven; *WikiLeaks* has revealed lately that “sources in the (Israeli) police estimate that Russian organised crime (Russian Mafia) has laundered as much as \$US 10 billion through Israeli holdings.”

Israel’s economy is booming because mega swindlers such as Bernie Madoff have been channeling their money via Zionists and Israeli institutions for decades. Israel is “doing well” because it is the leading trader in blood diamonds. Far from being surprising, Israel is also the fourth biggest weapon dealer on this planet... As if this is not enough, Israel is also prosperous because, every so often, it is caught engaged in organ trafficking and organ harvesting.

In short, Israel is doing better than other countries because it runs one of the dirtiest, non-ethical economies in the world. In spite of the Zionists’ initial promise to bring about a civilised ethical Jew, Israel has, instead, managed to develop an outstanding level of institutional dismissal of international law and universal values. It operates as a safe haven for money made in some horrendous global criminal activities. And it employs one of the world’s strongest armies to defend the wealth of just a few of the wealthiest Jews around.

Increasingly, Israel seems to be nothing more than a humongous money laundering haven for Jewish oligarchs, swindlers, weapons dealers, organ traffickers, organised crime and blood diamond traders...

I hope that my readers and friends will forgive me for saying it — I hope that I will forgive myself for saying it — but it seems to me that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and Israel's horrendous crimes against the Palestinian people, actually serves to divert attention away from Israel's complicity in some colossal and global crimes against vast populations around the world. Instead of addressing the above relentless greed-driven attempt to grab wealth at the expense of the rest of humanity, we are all focusing on a single territorial conflict, that actually brings to light just one devastating criminal side of the Jewish national project.<sup>12</sup>

So a *ribā-based* economic system is both a moral as well as a practical problem. Of course, we as Muslims, cannot differentiate between the two: moral transgressions lead to societal injustice. A stable economy requires, among other key components, a stable money supply, and there is no way to guarantee monetary stability in the presence of *ribā*, even at an infinitesimal rate. Banking without interest should just be a public service, in the same way that power distribution and air traffic are regulated by public agencies. The kind of corrupt and corrupting monetary system that dominates today cannot be tinkered with. It must be destroyed and replaced with a more equitable one. The Prophet (ﷺ) obliterated it in his lifetime, setting a precedent for Muslims of all succeeding generations.<sup>13</sup> *Ribā* anywhere is a threat to economic justice (and Islamic economic equilibrium) everywhere.

### Social Justice

The locus of Islamic temporal power is to be found where principles of social justice — as outlined in the Qur'an, the Sunnah, and the *Sirah* — are socialized not only into the natural lives of ordinary people, affecting their personal deportment and individual attachment to Allah (ﷻ), but also into civil and state institutions whose business is to provide a conducive environment for the Islamic



social persona to expand and grow. To this end, all of Allah's Prophets (ﷺ) were sent,

**Indeed, [even aforetime] did We send forth Our Apostles with all evidence of [this] truth; and through them We bestowed revelation from on high, and [thus gave you] a balance [wherewith to weigh right and wrong], so that human relations might be subjected to [standards of] institutional justice... (57:25).**

And thus the final Prophet, who completed the mission of the preceding Prophets (ﷺ), made social justice principles the life blood of a social consciousness engaged to the real world with the recognition that Allah's (ﷻ) *sunan* (social laws, conventions) are tightly connected to His corrective justice. To protect this fledgling Ummah, which emerged from a sea of *jāhiliyah* and after building it up to a point where self-recognition of its responsibilities became the focal point of its accountability to Allah (ﷻ), the Prophet (ﷺ) communicated to his Ummah the most important social justice imperatives, the *taqwá* of which would preserve their power and pre-eminent position in humanity. These include, but are not limited to,

- the abolition of the *jāhili* practice of attributing children to those who belonged to a higher class, “A newborn’s lineage derives from his [biological parents]; and those who produce offspring outside of the bounds of marriage are to be confined. Whoever disavows his father’s lineage and whoever betrays his guardian, then upon him is the condemnation of Allah, the angels, and all people. No rationale or distracting argument for a substitute is acceptable [in the matter of transferring lineage or guardians];”
- the outlawing of theft, “And no person may lawfully take his brother’s possessions except with his endorsement;”
- the abolition of lifelong servitude for a known wrong after restitution has been done, “Murder has its redress [*qiṣāṣ*], and for he who is accidentally [unintentionally] killed by a club or a stone, the compensation is 100 camels. And whoever increases [this compensation] belongs to [the tradition of] *jāhiliyah*...”

- the annulment of collective punishment and all forms of revenge that come out of clannish, tribal, national, or sectarian solidarity, “*And the blood contentions [reciprocal vengeance] of jāhiliyah are disestablished; and the first blood contention I [begin abolishing] is that of ‘Āmir ibn Rabī‘ah ibn al-Ḥārith ibn ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib;*”
- the proscription against indiscriminate murder, “*And do not, after I am gone, regress into kufr, some of you decapitating others, for I have left with you that which if you put into action, you will never go wrong: the Book of Allah and the Sunnah of His Prophet;*”
- the affirmation of the equality of all men before Allah (ﷻ); and
- the protection of women.

In this volume, because of space limitations, we will deal with the last three from the perspective of the power dimension of the Sirāḥ.

The Prophet (ﷺ) concluded the Farewell Message with the important warning, “*And do not, after I am gone, regress into kufr, some of you decapitating others, for I have left with you that which if you put into action, you will never go wrong: the Book of Allah and the Sunnah of His Prophet.*” In the opinion of those who think they have power — the tyrants, their enablers, and their facilitators — the ultimate expression of power is for one man to hold another’s life in his hands,

**Nay, verily, man is prone to tyranny whenever he believes himself to be independent [of Allah’s command and counsel] (96:6–7).**

**Are you not aware of that [king] who argued with Ibrāhīm about his Sustainer, [simply] because Allah had granted him [earthly] power? Lo! Ibrāhīm said, “My Sustainer is He who grants life and deals death.” [The king] replied, “I [too] grant life and deal death!” (2:258).**

In reality, this is less an expression of having power, than of lacking the discipline to exercise power in a just, equitable, and proper way.

Power is the domain of Allah (ﷻ); He grants it to whom He wills. Yielding to that reality is the domain of man. Guidance — the discipline to exercise power — comes from Allah (ﷻ), and obedience comes from man. Physical strength, what people normally associate with power, was never the main component in the wherewithal needed to go out and kill others, whether an individual or mass murder. Today, in the world of handguns, bombs, and weapons of mass destruction, anyone in possession of these can go out and kill — even a child can kill an adult, as demonstrated by the child soldiers in West and Central Africa. Even though an automatic weapon helps, what comes first is the attitude, the desire, and the socialization to settle social problems by using murder as a solution. Despite all their rhetoric to the contrary, all imperial, colonial, racist, and exclusivist power structures socialize their people to use murder, not social justice principles, as the primary instrument of social engineering (extermination) that leads to the consolidation of power. That is why, in practice, they allocate the vast majority of their fiscal budgets to war making, war materiel, and war strategy; and the fourth estate socializes the people into this posture. Listen to how Randall Amster, a professor of peace studies at Prescott College, analyzes President Obama’s “justice has been done” announcement of killing Osama bin Laden in a secret operation in Abbottabad, Pakistan on 5-1-2011,

Still, despite his deliberate tone, Obama’s words are especially notable for their explicit vindication of the military operations of the past decade. Overtly citing the war in Afghanistan and the practices of the global intelligence apparatus as primary drivers of this potential closure event, the President has put his stamp of approval on the circuitous post-9/11 course of action that brought us here. Taking this further, the post-speech media spin implicitly extends his logic to validate tactics such as drone strikes and undeclared military incursions that have placed the US in ethically murky waters while waging the War on Terror around the world.

...Make no mistake, this announcement signals a clear intention to vindicate the decisions of the past decade and continue on a similar course going forward. As if to affirm this historical eventuality, the media's immediate focus on the spontaneous demonstrations of patriotic fervor that have sprung up with echoes of "USA, USA" brings us right back to those fateful September days in 2001. The tenor of these public celebratory gatherings, and the content of the President's announcement, convey a strong sentiment that the last decade's wars have been worth it, and likewise that the extraordinary security measures here at home have been equally successful.

On some level, the death of a single individual is essentially being heralded as a justification for the deaths of at least hundreds of thousands (a figure largely comprised of civilians) in Iraq, Afghanistan, and elsewhere. It remedies all legal and moral defects attendant to the use of "enhanced interrogations" and "extraordinary renditions." It clears the ledgers on the trillions of dollars spent to undertake these efforts for nearly ten years. It squelches dissent on Patriot Act policies and the Homeland Security apparatus. And, most appreciably, it retroactively validates the [George W.] Bush Administration's open-ended waging of global warfare.<sup>14</sup>

The Prophet (ﷺ) is saying that such an attitude, exhibited by those who hold temporal power, is tantamount to *kufṛ*, and it is the attitude of *kufṛ* that leads to *ẓulm*.

In describing this human attitude, as it revealed itself in the behavior of Banū Isrā'īl and as a way of immortalizing it by placing it in the divine Book, Allah (ﷻ) says,

**And lo! We accepted your solemn pledge that you would not shed one another's blood, and would not drive one another from your homelands, whereupon**

you acknowledged it; and thereto you bear witness [even now]. And yet, it is you who slay one another and drive some of your own from their homelands aiding one another against them in sin and hatred; but if they come to you as captives, you ransom them; although your very [act of] driving them away has been made unlawful to you. Do you, then, commit yourselves to some parts of the divine Writ and deny the truth of the other parts? (2:84–85).

This was the attitude of previous people of scripture, who because of their behavior, no longer qualified to carry the Covenant. And sadly, this is also the attitude of Muslims today. As this book goes to press, there are so-called Muslims (obviously without any conscience and ones who are not affected by the *āyah*) who are killing indiscriminately scores of other Muslims in Bahrain, Yemen, Syria, Libya, and other places, no doubt aided and abetted by those who abandoned scripture in the past but still claim to be God's elect. In response to the deteriorating situation in Syria, one of the more influential scholars in Saudi Arabia, Ṣāliḥ al-Laḥaydān, citing an obscure opinion in the Mālikī *fiqh* and rationalizing his view by characterizing the Syrian protestors as a branch of Fāṭimī Shī'īs, just indicated that it is permissible for the Syrian despots to kill one-third of the Syrian population in order to rescue the other two-thirds!<sup>15</sup> When Muslims go out and kill each other and then rationalize it, **"...whereupon you acknowledged it; and thereto you bear witness [even now],"** they set themselves up for the consequences that accrue from the violation of Allah's (ﷺ) *sunan*, and thereby they are constrained to live in a world where they have no power. The Muslim social self has power when Muslims support each other against oppression and occupation, not when they ally with those who gratuitously spill Muslim blood and launch drone attacks against Muslim women and children.

As a key pillar of social justice, the Prophet (ﷺ) confirmed the equality of all Muslims regardless of their geographic, ethnic, racial, or class background,

*O people! Indeed your Sustainer is One, and your common father [referring to Adam] is one. All of you belong to Adam and Adam was made up of earth [soil]. The most honorable of you in Allah's sight is the one who is the most conscious of Allah's power and authority; and an Arab [one who is conversant in Arabic] has no preference over a non-Arab [one who is not conversant in Arabic] except in the degree of consciousness of Allah's power and authority.*

All human beings have a common father, and despite the myriad differences in appearance, all of them are made of the same stuff. The only way one human being can excel another is in the degree of his precautionary restraint against the consequences of violating Allah's (ﷻ) power (*taqwá*). Muslims have power when they respect Allah's (ﷻ) power, that is, when they have *taqwá*; Muslims are weak and exploitable when their public persona is socialized into conformity to other man-made power centers.

A key element of this social *taqwá* is to recognize that all humans are equal to each other and collectively inferior to the superiority of Allah (ﷻ). No human being or collection of humans have an intermediary power position between Allah (ﷻ) and the rest of humanity — all of them are *equally* inferior to Allah (ﷻ). Man's subordinate position vis-à-vis Allah (ﷻ) indicates that the rights and responsibilities that accrue to one human being necessarily accrue to them all. But what if Allah (ﷻ) is taken out of this equation altogether in human social, political, and economic relationships? This is what those who have a "Son of God," "chosen people," "divine right of kings," or "national sovereignty" complex have wanted all along. They are the ones who have integrated racism into the institutional mechanisms of a "civil" society that is made up of class hierarchies and economic disparities. Racism is probably one of the most enduring social deviations away from the scriptural frame of reference, in which all humans are created equal.

The Prophet's (ﷺ) words clearly suggest that Allah (ﷻ) permits human differences in the areas of race, ethnicity, color, and geographic origin. These are all an expression of Allah's (ﷻ) will. But if

the human understanding and subsequent misinterpretation of this divine will leads to animosities and hostilities, then man has shown that he cannot manage on his own without the benefit of guidance and direction. For this purpose Allah (ﷻ) sent His Messengers (ﷺ): to integrate human societies on the basis of a scriptural program that would affirm the universal brotherhood of man.

Muslims today are not capable of putting Qur'anic *āyāt* in this context of reality. Racism, sectarianism, gender discrimination, and other forms of *ʿaṣabīyah* are all thriving today in the majority Muslim world. Makkah, which was the seat of transnational and transcultural Islamic universalism and inclusivism is only a faint apparition of what it is supposed to be; it has once again become an exclusive enclave, devoid of the intent and purpose Ibrāhīm (ﷺ) built it for, not unlike the Yahūdī ownership of Jerusalem. As a symptom of their regression back into the *jāhiliyah* the Prophet (ﷺ) was counseling against, they have produced leaders, be they on the religious end of the spectrum or on the secular-political, who are loathe to tolerate dissenting views, and thus they cannot understand that while human societies are free to hold differing views, they cannot permit those differences to become an ideology that rationalizes race, class, and gender for purposes of discrimination and exploitation.

Once again, Muslims have power when a relationship of brotherhood exists between their rank and file, and between themselves and their leaders. Their record speaks for itself. A non-racist God, a non-racist Abraham (ﷺ), a non-racist Scripture, and a non-racist Makkah created for humanity a cosmopolitan Ummah that is shared equally by “blacks,” “whites,” “orientals,” Arabs, non-Arabs, and others.

Social justice goals often relate to uplifting those who traditionally and historically have had little power in society and are poorly represented. Women happen to be the largest social grouping in this domain. Their treatment, their feelings of security, and their personal and social freedoms are a barometer of the conscience of a given social order. One of the subjects to which the Prophet (ﷺ) devoted considerable attention in the Farewell Message is the rights of women and who is required to honor them,

*And thus, O people! Indeed your womenfolk have rights over you; and you have rights over them. Your [referring to men] right over them [referring to women] is that they shall not be unfaithful [have sexual intercourse with other men] to you, and they shall not permit anyone to enter your homes without your permission, and they shall not commit any openly indecent acts; but if they did, then Allah has permitted you to constrain them, and to leave them alone in bed, and to nudge them without hurting them; and if they desist and comply with you, then you are responsible for their livelihoods and their wardrobes within reason. And counsel each other [referring to men] pertaining to the well-being of women, for when they are in your care, they need your reinforcement [to be concerned about their welfare] for they are vulnerable; and you have taken them [in marriage] in accordance with Allah's trust, and it was by Allah's word that you are intimate with them [meaning sexual intercourse]. Therefore, be conscious of Allah's authority and power when it comes to women. And counsel each other [referring to men] pertaining to their well-being...*

Women represent the largest demographic that consistently and serially has its rights violated and withdrawn. They are the most convenient and easy victims of domestic violence, of displacement and humiliation during wars, of human trafficking, and of the flesh-for-sale business. Due to the perpetual war Muslims have had to endure for the past 100 years as well as their own centuries-old departure from the guiding words of the Qur'an and the standard of the Prophet (ﷺ), the situation of Muslim women is probably more desperate than any other women, even those in the poorest African and Central American countries. The socio-economic and intellectual potential of one-half of the Muslim population basically lies dormant.

But the overall condition of Muslim women is a measure of how well an Islamic society is performing. When Muslim women are marginal in their societies, then the Ummah is marginal in the world; when Muslim women are on the peripheries of socio-econ-



conomic development, then the Ummah is on the fringes of human productivity and advancement; when Muslim women are not protected, then the whole Ummah is violated; when Muslim women are raped by non-Muslim soldiers, then the Ummah is penetrated by imperial occupation forces and their God-denying hedonistic cultures; when Muslim women are forced to flee the security of their homes, then the Ummah is insecure in its own homelands; when illiteracy is forced upon Muslim women, then parochialism becomes the standard of the Ummah; and when Muslim women have no rights, then the Ummah has no respect.

The Ummah is not in bad shape *because* its women count for almost nothing; it is in a predicament because the locus of its identity is firmly lodged, not with Allah (ﷻ) and His Prophet (ﷺ), but in the hateful policies of those who have come through the centuries abusing the rights of the weak and powerless, albeit in a much more sophisticated way today. The condition of women is symptomatic. They are abused and separated from their families because the institutional support structures in society that are supposed to provide protection, a guarantee of rights, and legal redress have either broken down or are nonexistent. And so the Prophet (ﷺ) is addressing those in society who have the greatest potential to abuse: the men. Allah (ﷻ) showed us how to set up these support structures, but as a prerequisite He disciplined the male conscience so that it uses power less to oppress than to provide maximum support and facilitation for those who are traditionally deprived of the simple decency of living out their lives in dignity and to the full extent of their human potential,

**O you who are committed to Allah! It is not lawful for you to [try to] become heirs to your wives [by holding onto them] against their will; and neither shall you keep them under constraint with a view to taking away anything of what you may have given them, unless it be that they have become guilty, in an obvious manner, of immoral conduct. And consort with your wives in a goodly manner; for if you dislike them, it may well be**

**that you dislike something which Allah might yet make a source of abundant good (4:19).**

At this point, some may say — especially those who are intoxicated by so-called Western freedoms and “equality” between men and women — that these statements by Allah (ﷻ), His Prophet (ﷺ), and the Qur’an just confirm the charge that Islam is misogynistic. Because more *āyāt* and more statements of the Prophet (ﷺ) address men specifically, it proves that both favor men over women. But this has nothing to do with gender equality, gender parity, or gender preference, especially in the way that gender disparity is exploited by those who want to draw women into the work place so that they can work for below-average wages and into positions where they can “legally” sell their bodies for livelihood. This has to do with power and its abuses. Much of the Qur’an addresses those who are irresponsible with the exercise of power: for example, Pharaoh, Ahl al-Kitāb, the *kāfirs*, and the *ribā-financers*. In the relationship between man and woman, and between man and family, the one who is most likely to take advantage of his power position to oppress is the male, not the female. It is he who needs to have his traditionally and historically reckless behavior reined in and regimented. And so Allah (ﷻ) and His Messenger (ﷺ) address that problem — the cause of it — thus giving all society a chance to be secure and at peace. Only those who have an axe to grind against Islam would see it differently.

The most important collective responsibility of men is to ensure the Islamic society’s safety and security; simultaneously the most important social responsibility of women is to build community. And the rights of both genders are associated with these responsibilities. The issue of the specific rights pertaining to a gender becomes muddled when one set of responsibilities is given preference over the other, that is, imperatives of security trump those of community development. This ought not to be such a strange comparison when we live in a world in which, at least by what they say, security concerns dominate the international discourse, especially from the power centers in the world — America, Israel, and

Western Europe. When such a lopsidedness dominates human relations, community development activities do not even make it on the short list of human concerns; cutting social services to favor “defense” and security concerns in national budgets confirms this assertion. The net result is that society acquires a masculine identity, trivializing and alienating the feminine.

In the materialistic West, most peoples’ relationships are a byproduct of the places they work in, not of the communities they live in. Part of the reason is that women, who have an essential civilizational presence in building communities, are busy propping up the male-dominated workplace. A good portion of Americans do not even know their neighbors; how can they possibly build a cohesive, stable, and secure society by only concentrating on one aspect of it, and by committing the majority of its citizens, male and female alike, to this aspect alone: the economy?

The entire system is based on the workplace, and all are defined by it; to be sure there are other activities — family, recreation, volunteer work, entertainment, etc. — but these are all peripheral. Capitalism is highly one-dimensional and androcentric; thus all who are part of the system and want to advance in it, even women, are expected to exhibit male characteristics. In a very limited sense, there is “equality” only because women have the “freedom” to be men, not to be women and be respected for it. In capitalism, there can never be any true equality because the responsibilities peculiar to women have never been respected, and thereby their specific rights have never been guaranteed.

To the extent that Muslim societies now coming into a new independence fall for the false promises of gender equality in the West, they will be stung by the emergence of the same dysfunctional communities that now dot the Western landscape. Because of the forced imbalance between community and security, Western society along with its economy is on the edge; and Muslims, especially, should be all too aware that no other social unit can be judged with this as a reference point. The best answer lies in a society modeled on the Book of Allah (ﷻ) and the prototype of His final Prophet where complementary relationships between the distinc-

tiveness of a male and a female (marriage and family) lead to a community cohesion that expands civil liberties without endangering state security.

It is appropriate to sum up the Prophet's (ﷺ) admonitions on the necessity of prioritizing social justice in his own words,

*A Muslim's life, his family honor [womenfolk], and his property are sacrosanct to another Muslim. A Muslim is the brother of another Muslim: he neither oppresses him, nor forsakes him, and taqwá is here (and he pointed to the heart).<sup>16</sup>*

### **Cultivation of the Islamic Personality**

Social justice and economic justice require a vibrant and robust Islamic personality. Only a personality molded by Allah's (ﷻ) words and modeled upon the impeccable character of the Prophet (ﷺ) can be expected to make social and economic justice a part of the way a society thinks, the way it plans, the way it behaves, and the way it measures the results of its struggles. If observing the principles of social and economic justice is the locus of Islamic power, then the Islamic personality is the locus of its conscience. A mature Islamic conscience provides the impetus for driving social and economic justice into the public lives of Muslims in an Islamic society; Allah (ﷻ) describes this personality,

**Verily, in the creation of the heavens and the earth, and in the succession of night and day, there are indeed messages for all who are endowed with insight, [and] who remember Allah when they stand, and when they sit, and when they lie down to sleep, and [thus] reflect on the creation of the heavens and the earth, "O our Sustainer! You have not created [any of] this without meaning and purpose. Limitless are You in Your glory! Keep us safe, then, from suffering through fire!**

**"O our Sustainer! Whomsoever You shall commit to the Fire, him, verily, will You have brought to dis-**

grace [in this world]; and such evildoers will have none to support them. O our Sustainer! Behold, we heard a voice call [us] to a commitment of faith, ‘Commit to your Sustainer!’ And so we came to confirm [our commitment]. O our Sustainer! Forgive us, then, our sins, and efface our bad deeds; and let us die the death of the truly virtuous! And, O our Sustainer, grant us that which You have promised us through Your apostles, and disgrace us not on Resurrection Day! Verily, You never fail to fulfill Your promise!”

And thus does their Sustainer answer their prayer, “I shall not lose sight of the labor of any of you who labors [in My way], be it man or woman: each of you is an issue of the other. Hence, as for those who forsake the domain of evil, and are driven from their homelands, and suffer hurt in My cause, and fight [for it], and are slain, I shall most certainly efface their bad deeds, and shall most certainly bring them into gardens through which running waters flow, as a reward from Allah; for with Allah is the most beauteous of rewards.” (3:190–195).

In his Farewell Message, the Prophet (ﷺ) cited four important features of such a conscience,

- its accountability, “O subjects of Allah, I counsel you to be vigilant of Allah’s power [and corrective justice], and I prevail upon you to obey Him;”
- its fidelity to oaths, “And whoever is holding a trust is required to return it to its proprietor;”
- its wariness of Satan, “And thus, O people! Satan has given up being [openly] revered [idolized] in your country here, therefore he will be content in being obeyed in matters less than that — matters related to your own deeds that you may regard to be trivial — so be careful of him in matters of your dīn;” and,
- its attention to Islamic timekeeping.

Again because of space limitations, we will touch briefly on the last two of these, trying hard not to deviate from the theme of the book as it relates to the power aspects of the *Sīrah*.

Man in general will be prosperous and at peace in this life, and in the next, if he can successfully use the power of Allah (ﷻ) to overcome the power of Satan. Compared to Allah (ﷻ), Satan has no power, and by extension, Satan has very little power over a *mut-taqī* Muslim. But he has considerable power over the vast majority of human beings who have not conditioned themselves by Allah's (ﷻ) words and the struggle of the Prophet (ﷺ). Satan is the most implacable, the most constant, the most unyielding, and the most remorseless — in short, the most powerful — negative influence on the character, the conscience, the thoughts, the emotions, and the behavior of man,

**Did I not admonish you, O you children of Adam, that you should not conform to Satan — since, verily, he is your open enemy (36:60).**

**O you who are firmly committed to Allah! Enter into a state of peacefulness with Allah, and follow not Satan's footsteps, for verily he is your open enemy (2:208).**

**Behold, Satan is an enemy unto you, so treat him as an enemy. He but calls on his followers to the end that they might find themselves among such as are destined for the blazing flame (35:6).**

Allah (ﷻ) indicates that Satan is a self-declared and unpretentious enemy of man. If Satan did not have any power, he would merely be an irritant, not an enemy. An enemy not only despises you, but has the power to transform his hatred into a social momentum of narratives, historical justifications, action plans, strategies, programs, and policies. An enemy is there to defeat you — physically, psychologically, and emotionally — not to have an academic debate with you about his position.

Because the Muslims typically do not think in terms of acquiring and using power in order to accomplish a set of strategic objectives, they think, typically also, they live in a world where they have no enemies. They think that the natural response of those who do not know about Islam is animosity or fear of the unknown, and thus these Muslims try “to kill them” with information, thinking that a “peaceful” interfaith dialogue will offset the clash of civilizations.

First of all, any such engagement is a monologue, not a dialogue, because the Muslim, who is usually invisible, does not enter into the discussion with the strength that comes from confidence in Allah (ﷻ) and the methods of His Prophet (ﷺ). The predictable result is that the Muslims end up defending themselves against the attacks of those they thought did not know about Islam, and in most cases apologizing apparently for a violent reaction against the injustice of the military coreligionists of the debaters. In order for there to be a real dialogue, the Muslims will have to have power; they will have to come from a functioning Islamic society that is managed by an Islamic state, secured by an Islamic military, and led by an Islamic executive authority. And when that happens, the academic gloves will come off and these Muslims will discover they have enemies. None of those who come from a Christian or Yahūdī position, at least in the experience of this writer who has attended and participated in scores of these “dialogues,” has remotely suggested that their reading of the Old and New Testaments indicts American behavior in the world as an affront to God and a defamation of man. All of them love America, despite its faults and nihilistic history. Why? Because the power of America is the rationalization of their position. Stripped of the “credibility” that comes with American state and military power, intellectually, they have no leg to stand on.

You have enemies when you have power, whether it is of the soft kind (the power of influence that comes with integrity and character, like the Prophet (ﷺ) had in Makkah) or the hard kind (the power of state and arms, like he had in Madinah). As strange as it may sound to those who do not think about these things, even Allah (ﷻ) has enemies; indeed He says,

O you who are securely committed [to Allah], do not take My enemies — who are also your enemies — as your allies [sponsors], showing them affection even though they are bent on denying whatever truth has come to you, [and even though] they have driven the Apostle and yourselves away, [only] because you believe in Allah, your Sustainer! If [it be true that] you have gone forth [from your homes] to strive in My cause, and out of a longing for My goodly acceptance, [do not take them for your allies], inclining toward them in secret affection: for I am fully aware of all you may conceal as well as of all you do openly. And any of you who does this has already strayed from the right path (60:1).

So if Allah (ﷻ), the veritable Owner of power, has enemies, how is it possible for Muslims to have no enemies? If the Prophet (ﷺ), the finest man who ever graced this earth, had enemies, why is it so hard to fathom that Muslims committed to Allah (ﷻ) and His Messenger have no enemies? Talking about the power dimension of the *Sirah* is something of an anomaly for Muslims; they should read the above *āyah* over and over again so they can understand that the more power you have, the more incandescent your enemies become. And in today's world as Muslim power in the Muslim East is rising once again, their God, their Prophet (ﷺ), their Qur'an, and their *dīn* are being attacked and disparaged as never before by those who openly defend their imperial way of life (materialism, hedonism, occupation, perpetual war) and Judeo-Christian "values" (capitalism, democracy, globalization).

Satan most often presents himself in the guise of man, not as some other-worldly alien.

And when everything will have been decided [on the Day of Judgment], Satan will say, "Behold, Allah promised you something that was bound to come true! I, too, held out [all manner of] promises to you — but I deceived you. Yet I had no power at all over you: I



but called you, and you responded to me. Hence, blame not me, but blame yourselves. It is not for me to be your advocate, nor is it for you to be my advocate, for behold, I have [always] refused to admit there was any truth in your erstwhile belief that I had a share in Allah's divinity/authority (14:22).

This is why Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) was telling us to be careful of Satan. His strategy is to surround falsehood with a whole suite of rationalizations to confuse man, to entice him, and to misdirect him. Were it not for Allah's (ﷻ) mercy in the form of his revelations and the continuous stream of Prophets culminating with Muhammad (ﷺ), constantly reinforcing the idea that we have to be on guard, humanity would have been lost long ago with no possibility of redemption. And the Muslims are the ones to carry on the mission of Allah's Messengers (ﷺ), confident in the fact that Satan's wiles only augment their insight,

**Verily, they who are conscious of Allah bethink themselves [of Him] whenever any dark suggestion from Satan touches them — whereupon, lo! they begin to see [things] clearly (7:201).**

While Satan and his armies of *kufir* are the avowed enemies of the committed Muslims, their challenge gives us a measure of our capacities and forces us to think about our commitments so that we can acquire the conviction we need to act with confidence.

One of Satan's most consequential deceptions is that he has gotten the Muslims to manage their day-to-day and long-term activities with a timekeeping system that is not endorsed by Allah (ﷻ). In this regard, the Prophet (ﷺ) devoted a substantial portion of his Farewell Message to the issue, right after he talked about the subtle influence of Satan,

*O people! "The intercalation [of months] is but one more instance of [their] refusal to acknowledge the*

*truth — [a means] by which those who are bent on denying the truth are led further astray. They declare this [intercalation] to be permissible in one year and forbidden in [another] year, in order to conform [outwardly] to the number of months which Allah has hallowed: and thus they make allowable what Allah has forbidden...” [9:37] and they forbid what Allah has allowed. Timekeeping [pertaining to the progression of months during the year] now is in synchrony with [its order] when the celestial spheres and the Earth were created by Allah. And “Behold, the number of months, in the sight of Allah, is twelve months, [laid down] in Allah’s decree on the day when He created the heavens and the earth; [and] out of these, four are sacred,” [9:36] three of them are consecutive and one is solitary: Dhū al-Qa’dah, Dhū al-Hijjah, and al-Muḥarram; and the Rajab of Muḍar, which is between Jumādā and Sha’bān — have I not conveyed [the message]; O Allah, bear witness.*

This is not incidental, but it may appear to be that way because we do not think about what important points the Prophet (ﷺ) was touching on to enable us to maintain our principled power position on earth. If we were not to pay attention to his advices here, as happened shortly after he departed human company, we would set ourselves on a course to not having any power at all.

Managing a timekeeping system is integrally connected with having power. It may appear to be the most mundane and insignificant thing to think about; however if it is so insignificant, why do we perennially find ourselves fighting about what defines the start of an Islamic month, what day to begin Ramaḍān on, and when to initiate the Hajj? Allah (ﷻ) makes it very clear,

**They will ask you about the new moons. Say, “They indicate a schedule of times for people, including [their performance of] the pilgrimage.” (2:189).**

If we cannot solve what appear to be the simplest problems, what does that say about how much we matter in the world? We have to rely on someone else to order even our ordinary everyday activities.

Sometimes, it is said that when you are trying really hard to solve a problem, but you cannot, perhaps you are asking the wrong questions. Perhaps this problem is not as easy to solve as it appears on first glance, and the answer has eluded us because this issue has rarely been framed within the context of power. It takes power to properly and consistently manage a timekeeping system: structural power. It requires the power to broadly communicate the transition from one system to another; the power to enforce and regulate a new set of policies that drive the new paradigm into the lives of ordinary people; the power to socialize and educate the population to the benefits of the new way of running things; the power to gather data, catalog, and order it so that it can validate existing standards, or be used to create new ones; the power to train and produce experts who will evaluate the veracity of standards against new information; the power to maintain consistency in the way the system works so that predictability is an important outcome; the power to develop institutions that monitor how well the system is working; and the power to create a deliberative forum to settle any problems that will emerge on the way to full society-wide implementation.

These are not the tasks that individuals perform, regardless of their number and the degree of their sincerity. These tasks are discharged by a government; only a government can coordinate the activities of hundreds, thousands, perhaps hundreds of thousands of people around a directional course. And to properly manage a timekeeping system so that its smooth operation goes largely unnoticed, it may well take tens of thousands of people. So in order to securely implement an Islamic timekeeping system, the first order of business is to have an Islamic state that is in charge of an Islamic society, which is conditioned to expect Islamic solutions for Islamic needs and aspirations. Thus it is significant that the Prophet (ﷺ) ordered the institutional use of the Islamic Calendar when the consolidated power of the Islamic State was not challengeable by any other power center in the Peninsula.

Even though much of this territory has been covered in *The Ascendant Qur'an* (Vol. 2), it would be helpful to briefly reiterate some of the more important points.<sup>17</sup> Keeping time and managing time is an essential part of human life; it is a natural part of human existence altogether. Man depends on it as much as he needs air to breathe or water to drink. It is because of the passage of time that man is able to classify and catalog events in the past, the present, and the future. For this reason, man over the ages has used various systems to record the passage of time, to give a reference point to historical information, and to plan out his daily, weekly, monthly, and yearly activities. All ancient and modern timekeeping systems, to various degrees of accuracy, are keyed to the relative motions of the Earth, the Sun, and the Moon. The fact that the motions of these three bodies in space are consistent and repeatable over a certain interval makes the notions of predictability in the future (for example, weather patterns over the course of the coming year) and extrapolation in the past (for instance, carbon dating for geological and anthropological purposes) possible. A calendar, which is based on the choice of a timekeeping system, is simply a time-scheduling mechanism that organizes days into weeks, weeks into months, months into years, and years into centuries.

When queried about why they prefer to use other timekeeping systems to the Islamic one, most Muslims reflexively respond by saying that it is just not used anymore, and that they are content to only use it for ritual observances. Those Muslims who put some thought into it say that the uncertainty of when the Islamic months begin, and the variation therein from country to country or from city to city within the same country, precludes them from using it on a consistent basis. The Gregorian Calendar, which is now called the "common calendar" because of its widespread usage around the world, relies on managing the same uncertainty by keying the calendar to one revolution of the Earth around the Sun, called a *solar year*. Most would recognize this to be a solar scheme in which the solar year is arbitrarily divided into 12 roughly equal segments called *months*; these months are typically keyed to the seasons: Fall, Winter, Spring, and Summer. The additive uncertainty that builds

up every year is offset by adding one day to every fourth year, called a *leap year*. By contrast, in the Islamic Calendar, which is a purely lunar one, no leap days or leap months ever have to be added and each month is always 29 or 30 days.

In so far as the Gregorian Calendar is concerned, the main question the Muslims need to ask is: what is the necessity in the modern world of keying the calendar to the change of seasons? For ancient agrarian and migratory cultures, this may have been important because it was necessary to be able to accurately predict when to plan for the harvest, or when to get ready to move to warmer climates during the winter season. In the modern world, it may also be important due to the seasonal movement of goods and seasonal trends related to the sale of clothing and the provision of services such as chimney cleaning, for instance. The 23.5-degree axial tilt of the Earth with respect to the Sun is responsible for the change of seasons, the equinoxes, and the solstices; but given the fact that modern science understands, to an extremely high degree of precision, the exact position of the Earth with respect to the Sun, and the fact that the solar calendar is keyed to these positions requiring the addition of leap days every four years, why is it still necessary to define months that arbitrarily have 28, 30, and 31 days? And further, now that the modern West is in the post-industrial information age, a round-the-clock 24/7 culture — no longer an agrarian one — why is it necessary to maintain a timekeeping system that stays in step with the seasons?

The issue of uncertainty (about the beginning of each Islamic month) for the Muslims goes far deeper than a desire for convenience; in fact it is complicated by a historical lack of confidence in Allah (ﷻ) and His Messenger (ﷺ). The Muslims need to be cognizant that uncertainty itself is only threatening when there is no strategy to *manage* it. There is uncertainty in everything; man only becomes comfortable with uncertainty once he learns how to manage it, and then he does not think about it again. This is what the proponents of the Gregorian Calendar do better than the Muslims. They have figured out how to manage not only the inherent uncertainty of the motions of the Sun, the Moon, and the Earth, but also

the uncertainty that results from flawed assumptions. And on top of that, they have broadly communicated their management scheme to all sectors of society who deem this to be important, and because of this, most people rarely think about it.

Outside of the context of an Islamic government in charge of an Islamic society, it is very hard for Muslims to understand that Islamic timekeeping is an integral part of the Islamic totality; no other way of managing time will do. It is integrated into the greater Islamic imperative of universal justice, balance, and equity for all people. Consider how Ramaḍān occurs in a different season every decade. Those who have a short fast in some years will have a longer fast in others, and vice-versa. So, no Muslim on earth will be constrained to have a perpetually long fast if he stays in one place all his life, and simultaneously, no Muslim will have the luxury of having a perpetually short fast. Those who have ambulatory problems or are elderly could plan the Hajj in a season where the weather in Makkah is relatively cooler compared to other hotter months. Then there are certain days that are more valuable than other days: all the days of Ramaḍān, the last ten nights of Ramaḍān, Laylaḥ al-Qadr, the first ten days of Dhū al-Ḥijjaḥ, and Yawm ‘Arafāt. But with the constant back-and-forth between the Gregorian and Islamic dates, and the unforgiveable callousness of governments in Muslim countries in this regard, it is almost impossible to place these mercy-filled days in the right spot. On these days, more of Allah’s (ﷻ) mercy is made available to errant and wayward human beings. These are the days to be taken advantage of, and thus it is important to know exactly when they occur. And benefits like these are all in keeping with Allah’s (ﷻ) plan of being meticulous about justice in the same way that He is liberal with His mercy.

### **A Final Word**

As would be obvious to the discerning reader who has made it to this point in the book, volumes can be written not only on the power dimension of the Sīrah but also on the Prophet’s (ﷺ)

Farewell Message delivered at Ḥajjah al-Wadā'. This book of course is just the beginning of such discussion but, as more and more Muslims finally come of age politically, the hope here is to guide their efforts in the principled acquisition and exercise of power, and to take advantage of their experiences to expand on the lessons that can be derived from the impeccable statesmanship of the Prophet (ﷺ). What is required is a paradigm shift in the way we study the Sīrah, how we think of the noble Messenger (ﷺ), and how we execute Islamic imperatives in a world that conflates personal interest with universal justice.

Under the influence of Western political thought, Muslims have accepted the notion that power is corrupting and the domain of the arrogant and unscrupulous. The refrain, "power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely," is well known in Western political and academic discourse. This is because the exercise of power is not anchored in divine guidance or the teachings of any of Allah's Prophets (ﷺ). Contemporary Western societies may be made up of nominal Christians but their lives are not guided by the teachings of what is left of the Bible or the example of the noble Prophet Jesus (ﷺ). Tolerating oppression from governments, who would go so far as to try to kill a prophet and other people of justice, is now a part of Christian theology. The same holds true for the overwhelming majority of those who claim to be adherents of Judaism.

Muslims are the only people that have not completely abandoned the teachings of the Qur'an or the Sunnah and Sīrah of the noble Messenger (ﷺ). But most Muslims, regrettably, have reduced the Prophet's (ﷺ) Sunnah and Sīrah to a few rituals. Thus, it could be argued that Muslims may carry a greater burden of guilt than the Western orientalist who have made a career out of deliberately distorting and misrepresenting the Sīrah and Sunnah of the noble Messenger (ﷺ). The Muslims are guilty of distorting the Sīrah by neglect. While history has certainly contributed to this mind-set, there is no excuse not to abandon the baggage of history when we have ample evidence from the Sīrah itself that it has everything to do with the disciplined acquisition and principled exercise of power based on divine precepts.

In His infinite wisdom, Allah (ﷻ) has not made everyone the same. Some are rich, others are poor; some are strong, others are weak. There is, thus, a power differentiation and will always be so. What is seriously remiss in the world is that those who are rich and powerful use their advantage to exploit the weak and poor. Islam, on the other hand, regulates the use of power. The powerful are not permitted to exploit the weak and desperate. It is easy for a grown-up, for instance, to beat up a child, but is this moral? While most people would immediately consider the gratuitous beating of a child abhorrent, the same degree of sensitivity does not exist when it comes to oppressing or exploiting the weak and the poor. Powerful countries attack and kill millions of innocent people using lethal weapons without giving any thought or showing any remorse for such wanton acts of barbarism. The world today can be characterized as being governed by the laws of the jungle where stronger beasts attack and devour the weaker ones. Are human beings no better than beasts on two legs?

Islam insists they are; that is why the Qur'an refers to them as being **"...created in the best conformation" (95:4)** but the Qur'an also warns that they have a tendency to fall into the lowest depths of depravity unless they are conscious of Allah's (ﷻ) power presence,

**And thereafter We reduce him [man] to the lowest of the low, excepting only such as those who securely commit [to Allah] and do good works; and theirs shall be a reward unending! (95:5–6).**

So how can human beings be prevented from falling into the lowest depths of depravity? Allah (ﷻ) has regulated the use of power by providing guidance to all mankind and the criterion (2:185, 25:01) by which to judge right from wrong. But only those will benefit from this guidance that have *taqwá*. Thus, having wealth or power is not a license to indulge one's fancy. Human beings have to behave on a much higher plane; they are endowed with all the positive qualities, physical as well as mental, corresponding to the function they were meant to perform: being Allah's (ﷻ) trustee on



earth. And this is only possible if their values are firmly anchored in divine guidance.

Allah (ﷻ) has not only provided guidance in the form of revelation of the Qur'an but also sent a perfect guide — Muhammad (ﷺ) — who is a role model with the most lofty character (68:04) as well as an example to all humanity (33:21) for all times. Since he is the role model till eternity and the embodiment of the teachings of the Qur'an, the absence of discussion of the power dimension of his Sīrah is all the more remarkable.

Muslims cannot sleepwalk through life nor tiptoe averting their gaze from the burning issues confronting the world from institutionalized social injustice facilitated by economic injustice to institutionalized political injustice brought on by racism, classism, gender inequality, and conflict. Only a holistic look at the Sīrah with the power dimension front and center can bring Muslims back to the role assigned to them by Allah (ﷻ) as **“...the best community created for mankind” (3:110)**. That can only materialize if Muslims have power. And the way to acquire (principled) power is to not get sidetracked by rivals to Allah's (ﷻ) power, *“... for I have left with you that which if you put into action, you will never go wrong: the Book of Allah and the Sunnah of His Prophet.”*

When the Sīrah of the noble Messenger (ﷺ) becomes the model for Muslim action, then the Ummah will automatically resume the role it was set up for, **“It is thus that We have made you [the committed Muslims] an Ummah of access; so that you may be witnesses over [other] peoples while the Apostle becomes the witness over you” (2:143)**. Muḥammad al-Āṣī says in *The Ascendant Qur'an* (Vol. 2),

Is it a coincidence that there seems to be a direct connection between the status and centrality of the Prophet (ﷺ) and the status and centrality of the Ummah? The more central the Prophet (ﷺ) is to the Ummah, the more central the Ummah is to humanity; and the more “marginalized” the Prophet (ﷺ) is within the Ummah, the more marginalized the Ummah is within humanity. When the

Prophet's (ﷺ) example is the defining standard of action in the Ummah, when his Sunnah and Sirāḥ are the molding forces of this Ummah, then — and only then — will this Ummah have a leading role in the community of nations and world affairs. Without the Prophet's (ﷺ) leadership, this is a drifting nation; and without the Ummah's supervision it is a drifting humanity.<sup>18</sup>

We pray to Allah (ﷻ) to grant us the wisdom and the *firāsah* to understand His guidance and to follow the example of His beloved Messenger (ﷺ), upon whom be Allah's (ﷻ) peace and blessings forever more. *Āmīn*.

## Notes and References

- 1 *mawlá* – refer to note 35 on p. 153.
- 2 Dr. Muḥammad Ḥamīdullāh, *Al-Wathā'iq al-Siyāsīyah fī al-'Ahd al-Nabawī wa-al-Khilāfah al-Rāshidah, 7th edition*. (Beirut, Lebanon: Dār an-Nafā'is, 2001), pp. 226–28.
- 3 **Arab Spring of 2011** – designates the civil momentum in the Arab world, in the early part of 2011 (1432AH) that deposed the dictators in Tunisia and Egypt, Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali and Hosni Mubarak, and led to ongoing protests and government crackdowns in Yemen, Bahrain, Syria, Libya, and to a lesser extent in Jordan, Oman, Algeria, Iraq, and Morocco.
- 4 United States Central Intelligence Agency, *The World Factbook*, 2007. (Langley, Virginia, USA: Central Intelligence Agency, 2007). <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/rankorder/2079rank.html>
- 5 Anup Shah, *Poverty Facts and Stats*. (globalissues.org: Global Issues, September 10, 2010). <http://www.globalissues.org/article/26/poverty-facts-and-stats>
- 6 EarthTrends Country Profiles, *Population, Health, and Human Well-Being — Libyan Arab Jamahiriya*. (earthtrends.wri.org: World Resources Institute – EarthTrends Environmental Information, 2003). [http://earthtrends.wri.org/pdf\\_library/country\\_profiles/pop\\_cou\\_434.pdf](http://earthtrends.wri.org/pdf_library/country_profiles/pop_cou_434.pdf)

- 7 **Muammar Qaddafi** (1942–present) – Libyan dictator since 1969 when he overthrew Italian colonial proxy, King Idris, in a military coup; established what is now known as the Libyan Arab Republic, and later characterized it as the Libyan Jumhuriyah (1977). His philosophical ideas about Arab national socialism are detailed in the so-called *Green Book*.

**Saddam Hussein** (1937–2006) – absolute ruler of Iraq from 1979–2003, when he was deposed by the United States and later executed in 2006 by a US-installed puppet government. He was launched into power by the CIA who not only viewed him as a bulwark against communism, but also gave him enough intelligence on his rivals, so that he could eliminate them. The US continued to support, finance, and coach him throughout the 1980s during the First Gulf War between Iraq and Iran, where he ordered the usage of chemical weapons against the Iranians. After he invaded Kuwait in August 1990, he began to fall out of favor with his US paymasters, who turned him back in the Second Gulf War and then put the entire country under severe economic and trade sanctions leading to the death of nearly one million Iraqi children.

**Nicolas Sarkozy** (1955–present) – right-wing politician who became the 23rd president of the French Republic, since 2007. Responsible for introducing, catalyzing, and getting behind some of the most anti-Muslim, Islamophobic legislation in Europe.

- 8 **Bank of International Settlements (BIS)** – based in Basle, Switzerland, it was established by the Hague Agreements of 1930, and is the oldest international finance organization. Not accountable to any government, it “...fosters international monetary and financial cooperation and serves as a bank for central banks. The BIS fulfills this mandate by acting as a forum to promote discussion and policy analysis among central banks and within the international financial community; by being a center for economic and monetary research; by being a prime counterparty for central banks in their financial transactions; and by acting as agent or trustee in connection with international financial operations.”<sup>a</sup>

Retired US General Wesley Clark was heard to say in a 2007 *Democracy Now* interview, “...about 10 days after September 11, 2001, [I] was told by a general that the decision had been made to go to war with Iraq. [I] was surprised and asked why. ‘I don’t know!’ was the response. ‘I guess they don’t know what else to do!’ Later, the same general said they planned to take out seven countries in five years: Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, and Iran.” In the context of banking, one thing these seven countries have in common is that none of them is listed among the 56 member banks of the BIS. That evidently puts them outside the long regulatory arm of the cen-

tral bankers' central bank in Switzerland. Iraq has been under US occupation since 2003; Sudan is going to be dismembered in July 2011; during the past decade, the indigenous Islamic Courts Union in Somalia was displaced by US/Ethiopian occupation forces; Syria and Libya are both fighting off internal insurgencies, both of which are receiving facilitation from imperialist power centers; Israel tried to dismantle and disable Hizbullah in the 2006 invasion of Southern Lebanon; and there is a constant drumbeat of war against the Islamic Republic of Iran, not to mention 30 years of sanctions.

a <http://www.bis.org/about/index.htm>

- 9 Ellen Brown, *Libya: All About Oil, or All About Banking?* (Global Research.ca: Center for Research on Globalization, April 14, 2011). <http://www.globalresearch.ca/index.php?context=va&aid=24306>
- 10 Muḥammad Ḥ al-ʿĀṣī, *The Ascendant Qur'an, Volume 3*. (Toronto, Canada: Institute of Contemporary Islamic Thought, 2009), pp. 332–65.
- 11 Khalil Abdul-Rahman, *Why the Usury Part of a Debt Can Never Be Fully Paid*. (Columbia, Maryland, USA: IjtihadToday, April 22, 2009). [https://ijtihadtoday.org/wiki/Why\\_the\\_Usury\\_Part\\_of\\_a\\_Debt\\_Can\\_Never\\_Be\\_Fully\\_Paid](https://ijtihadtoday.org/wiki/Why_the_Usury_Part_of_a_Debt_Can_Never_Be_Fully_Paid)
- 12 Gilad Atzmon, *Israeli Economy for Beginners*. (London, UK: Gilad Atzmon website, February 11, 2011). <http://www.gilad.co.uk/writings/gilad-atzmon-israeli-economy-for-beginners.html>
- 13 Much of this analysis comes from the editor's contribution to Volume 3 of *The Ascendant Qur'an*, referenced above.
- 14 Randall Amster, *Now What? Obama Bags Osama*. (counterpunch.org: Counter Punch Magazine, May 2, 2011).
- 15 <http://www.muslm.net/vb/showthread.php?p=2895287>  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PfqG1MtXkiU>
- 16 Narrated by Wāthilah ibn al-Asqa' al-Laythī and recorded by Ibn 'Adī.
- 17 Muḥammad Ḥ al-ʿĀṣī, *The Ascendant Qur'an, Volume 2*. (Toronto, Canada: Institute of Contemporary Islamic Thought, 2009), pp. 282–93.
- 18 Ibid., p. 23–24.

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Earliest compilers of the Sirah in chronological order according to the date the author passed away. Most of these works are no longer extant.

1. 'Urwaḥ ibn al-Zubayr ibn al-'Awwām al-Asadī al-Qurashī (died, 94AH).
2. 'Āmir ibn Sharāḥīl ibn 'Abd ibn Dhī Kibār Abū 'Amr al-Hamdānī thumma al-Sha'bī (died, 109AH).
3. Wahb ibn Munabbih ibn Kāmil ibn Shaykh Abū 'Abdillāh al-Ṣana'ānī (died, 114AH).
4. 'Āsim ibn 'Umar ibn Qatādaḥ al-Anṣārī (died, 121AH).
5. Muḥammad ibn Muslim ibn 'Ubaydillāh ibn 'Abdillāh ibn Shahāb al-Zuhrī (died, 124AH).
6. Ya'qūb ibn 'Utbaḥ ibn al-Mughīrah ibn al-Akhnas ibn Sharīq al-Thaqafī (died, 128AH).
7. Mūsá ibn 'Uqbah ibn Abī 'Abbās al-Asadī (died, 141AH).
8. Abū al-Mundhir Hishām ibn 'Urwaḥ ibn al-Zubayr ibn al-'Awwām (died, 146AH).
9. Abū Bakr Muḥammad ibn Iṣḥāq ibn Yasār (died, 150/151AH).
10. 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz al-Awsī (died, 162AH).
11. Muḥammad ibn Ṣāliḥ ibn Dīnār al-Timār (died, 168AH).
12. Abū Ma'shar Najīḥ al-Madanī (died, 170AH).
13. Abū Muḥammad 'Abdullāh ibn Ja'far ibn 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Makhzamī (died, 170AH).

14. 'Abd al-Malik ibn Muḥammad ibn Abī Bakr ibn 'Amr ibn Ḥazm al-Anṣārī (died, 176AH).
15. 'Alī ibn Mujāhid al-Rāzī al-Kindī (died, 180AH).
16. Ziyād ibn 'Abdullāh ibn al-Ṭufayl al-Bakkā'ī (died, 183AH).
17. Salamaḥ ibn al-Faḍl al-Abrash al-Anṣārī (died, 191AH).
18. Abū Muḥammad Yaḥyá ibn Sa'id ibn al-Abān al-Umawī (died, 194AH).
19. Walīd ibn Muslim al-Qurashī (died, 195AH).
20. Yūnus ibn Bakīr (died, 199AH).
21. Abū 'Abdullāh Muḥammad ibn 'Umar ibn Wāqid al-Aslamī, popularly known as al-Wāqidī (died, 207AH).
22. Ya'qūb ibn Ibrāhīm al-Zuhrī — student of al-Zuhrī (died, 208AH).
23. 'Abd al-Razzāq ibn Hamām ibn Nāfi' al-Ḥumayrī (died, 211AH).
24. Abū Muḥammad 'Abd al-Malik ibn Hishām ibn Ayyūb al-Ḥumayrī (died, 213 or 218AH).
25. 'Umar ibn Shubbaḥ al-Baṣrī (died, 262AH).
26. Muḥammad ibn 'Isá al-Tirmidhī (died, 279AH).
27. Ibrāhīm ibn Ishāq ibn Ibrāhīm (died, 285AH).
28. Abū Bakr Aḥmad ibn Abī Khuthaymaḥ al-Baghdādī (died, 299AH).





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## NOTES

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## ABOUT THE BOOK

This book deals with only one, but often neglected aspect of the *Sīrah* of the noble Messenger of Allah (ﷺ): the power dimension. While there is no shortage of books on the *Sīrah*, still none can say that enough has been written or that no more can be said about the blessed life of the one described by Allah (ﷻ) Himself as a mercy to all the worlds. The reason is simple: the noble Messenger (ﷺ) was sent as a guide and as a teacher to bring humanity out of darkness into light.

In this particular work, the focus is on how the letters the noble Messenger (ﷺ) wrote to world leaders of his time, inviting them to Islam, as well as the numerous treaties authorized by him helped to establish, consolidate, and enhance the temporal power of Islam. While some *Sīrah* books have dealt with these aspects briefly, they require a more detailed treatment to highlight their significance for Muslims today. And thus with the subject of power as the theme, the various chapters look at the Covenant of Madinah and what impact it had on legitimizing the first Islamic State in Madinah, the treaties entered into with tribes living in the vicinity of Madinah, the Treaty of Ḥudaybiyah as well as the Prophet's (ﷺ) Farewell Message, delivered during Ḥajjah al-Wadā'. Collectively, they begin to shed some light on a much neglected aspect of the *Sīrah*, one that Muslims would find helpful in their quest to establish a just and representative socio-economic and political order in their societies.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Zafar Bangash is Director of the Institute of Contemporary Islamic Thought, based in Toronto, Canada. He is also on the Editorial Board of *Crescent International*, an Islamic newsmagazine he has been involved with since 1978. His articles have appeared in newspapers and magazines all over the world. He is also the author of several books including but not limited to *The Makkah Massacre and the Future of the Haramain* (1988), *In Pursuit of the Power of Islam: Major Writings of Kalim Siddiqui* (editor, 1996), *The Seerah: A Power Perspective* (co-authored with Muḥammad al-Āṣī, 2000), *Concepts of Leader and Leadership in Islam* (2002), and *Imam Khomeini: A Leader of Principle and Purpose* (jointly edited with Afeef Khan, 2010).



Published by *Crescent International* for:  
The Institute of Contemporary  
Islamic Thought

